

# Braille Monitor



JANUARY, 1986

VOICE OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

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# THE BRAILLE MONITOR

PUBLICATION OF THE  
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

## CONTENTS

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PRESIDENT JERNIGAN SPEAKS TO THE AIRLINES . . . . .	1
STILL MORE ON THE AIRLINES SAFETY HOAX . . . . .	12
AN OLD DILEMMA WITH A NEW TWIST . . . . .	13
by Ramona Walhof	
OF DISCRIMINATION AND SAFETY DEPOSIT BOXES . . . . .	15
RICK SMITH BECOMES EAGLE SCOUT . . . . .	17
by Kenneth Jernigan	
SOCIAL SECURITY, SSI, AND MEDICARE FACTS FOR 1986 . . . . .	18
by James Gashel	
THE RIGHT TO LITERACY . . . . .	20
by Claudell Stocker	
NONPROFIT POSTAGE RATES SAVED IN CONGRESS: THE FEDERATION LEADS THE BATTLE . . . . .	22
by James Gashel	
TO BE A PARENT . . . . .	30
IS INDEPENDENCE WORTH \$2.50? . . . . .	34
by Fred J. Wurtzel	
WHAT WAS THAT CLICKING AND CLACKING ANYWAY? . . . . .	35
by Fred J. Wurtzel	
SPEECH OUTPUT FOR THE IBM PERSONAL COMPUTER . . . . .	37
by Curtis Chong	
WHITE CANE SAFETY DAY INFORMING THE COMMUNITY . . . . .	48
by Ronald Greene	
ON THE BARRICADES AT THE BUMPER CARS . . . . .	49
by Mike George	

PROCLAMATION . . . . .	50
TALKING CLOCKS—WHERE ARE WE NOW? . . . . .	51
by W. Harold Bleakley	
RECIPES . . . . .	52
MONITOR MINIATURES . . . . .	54

## THE BRAILLE MONITOR

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### THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

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SPEAKING FOR THE BLIND—IT IS THE BLIND SPEAKING FOR THEMSELVES**

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## PRESIDENT JERNIGAN SPEAKS TO THE AIRLINES

NINNESCAH is a magazine which is published primarily for the airline industry. Its editor is Ellis Reida. On October 9, 1985, Mr. Reida came to the National Center for the Blind in Baltimore to interview President Jernigan. He wanted to know what the controversy involving the airlines was all about. The interview appeared in the November-December, 1985, issue of NINNESCAH).

In fact, almost the entire issue of the magazine was taken up with the airline problem. First came an editorial by Mr. Reida, followed by the interview with President Jernigan. Here are the editorial and the interview:

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### What Do Blind People Really Want?

After reading the interview beginning on page two, readers may be tempted to dismiss Dr. Jernigan as a "fanatic," and thus that his arguments in general have little merit. This conclusion could be a mistake.

Almost certainly air carriers have missed two fundamental points in the position of the Federation of the Blind. They are that restrictions in service are unwarranted by the facts, and are a humiliation to a class of people.

It is illustrative that Dr. Jernigan constantly compares the problems of blind people in the United States to those of black people. This comparison seems central to Federation thinking.

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The first event in the civil rights struggle of black people in the United States also began with a transportation issue. In the fifties in Montgomery, Alabama, a boycott was launched against the city bus company, because black people had to sit in the backs of buses. There was no question of denial of service, and the back of the bus got there as quickly as the front. The issue was that the forcing of a class of people to sit in certain areas was a violation of their civil rights.

The airlines have the argument of safety to justify restrictive seating, but the Federation insists that this principle is based on prejudicial thinking, and not on actual safety realities. Dr. Jernigan's presentation probably is strongest when he attacks these assumptions.

The Federation position possibly might be made even stronger. To use only one example, recently the Association of Flight Attendants have complained that the permitting of excess baggage in the cabin is a safety hazard. On October 28, 1985, the New York Times had a lead article on the subject, and gave graphic descriptions of abuses. Reports concerning the recent tragedy at Manchester, England, indicated delays in evacuation because passengers tried to rescue cabin baggage.

Yet, the Air Transport Association is arguing against stricter regulation of cabin baggage. It is hard to escape the suspicion that the reason is that such restrictions would impact on a class of

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passenger about which the airlines have great financial concern, the business traveler.

Since the actual safety threat from a blind passenger in an exit row seems certainly no greater, and by all evidence much less, than the excess baggage of business travelers, the airlines seem open to the charge that they can be selectively concerned about safety, depending on what class of passenger is being restricted.

Dr. Jernigan is wrong in his belief that airlines are deliberately persecuting blind passengers. However, he is on firmer ground in charging that they approach the problem of safety in a haphazard way.

They need to give attention to this problem.

Ellis Reida  
Managing Editor

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### **Blind Passengers and Air Travel**

#### **A Conversation With Dr. Kenneth Jernigan**

Reida: Would you sum up the situation which exists for blind people today in air travel, as you see it?

President Jernigan: I think that you have got to take it in phases. Back in the fifties and sixties blind people had no trouble flying at all. I guess that I, myself, flew perhaps a million miles in those days. If one needed any help, some member of the crew would give it. If one did not, there was no question. That doesn't mean that someone might not ask if you wanted to board ahead of

time, and maybe you might decide to do so for some reason.

However, it didn't carry with it any idea of force or compulsion. The storing of the cane, for example, was an informal affair, which was worked out for the convenience of the passenger and the airline with no problem. It might be stored at the seat, or if you wanted, the "stewardess," as we called them in those days, might put it someplace else if you asked her.

Then the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was passed, and with it the requirements for affirmative action for the disabled. Certain things changed in the psychology of the airline industry. In the first place, more people were traveling. The airlines became (despite their propaganda) more like buses than the airlines of old. They became a means of mass transportation, and ceased to think of people as individuals, and more as a mass to be moved.

Also, the new requirements of attention to disabled people caused the airlines to begin to give thought to it. "We have a problem that we didn't know that we had." They began to feel that they had to prove to the government, the public, and maybe even a little to themselves, that they were conscious of the disabled and were setting up affirmative action programs.

Too, perhaps without actually realizing what they were doing, the airlines lumped all disabled people together, and thus each individual in a subgroup was considered to have all the problems of each person in each other subgroup. The composite of such lumping was the concept of a totally helpless individual who could scarcely travel outside the home, let alone go on an airplane.

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This situation led first to an offer of assistance, then anger when the offer was not accepted, and a resistance to the refusal with the dodge that it is a matter of "safety."

As the lumping of all disabled occurred, and as blind people found themselves the objects of special attention, then airline personnel began to hunt for things which seemed to be problems. Maybe we had better preboard you because you will be a problem to me. You may block the aisles, or be trampled in the rush. You need time to seat yourself and get accustomed to the flight so it won't be a strain on you.

There were preboarding, and postboarding, and the business of whether you could keep a cane at your seat. When blind people said "no" to conforming to the rules, it embarrassed the people who had made the offer. Hardening of attitudes and then confrontation developed. After a lawsuit it was decided that it really was not a "safety" matter, and yes, you could keep your cane at your seat.

We have now come to the point where the airlines have determined among themselves, maybe not in a straightout conspiracy but there is talk among airline personnel, that they are going to make an issue out of it and put blind people in their places. Blind persons have just about decided that they are not going to be put in their places, unless you regard their places as being the same kind of citizens as other people in this country. We ought not be subjected to humiliation, browbeating, and all the rest of it. I think that is where we are.

Reida: As I understand it, you feel much of the problem began with the pass-

ing of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, including Section 504 mandating all federal departments to issue regulations. The CAB issued such regulations in 1981, and the airlines then felt that they had to issue rules in this area...

President Jernigan: I don't think that is right. I don't think that 504 mandates the development of any rules for blind passengers. Some airlines, incidentally, have stated that, for the purposes of air travel, blind persons should not be regarded as disabled.

There is no reason to develop special rules, and the problem is when you develop such special rules. If rules were developed for blacks on airplanes, it would open the door for anyone who wanted to discriminate, dominate, or custodialize blacks to do it. Only when you say that the blacks have the same rights as whites, that there shall be no special rules, only then do you have an incentive for equal treatment and for people to be able to pay their money and travel like anyone else. For the purposes of air travel, blind persons should not be different. Let them travel in peace.

Reida: Do you feel that blind people have any handicaps at all in traveling by air?

President Jernigan: I think that individual blind persons may have individual handicaps, as individual sighted persons do. However, overall the average blind person is no more limited in air travel than the average sighted person. You don't test sighted persons to see what their panic level is. You don't test them to see if they have heart conditions, nor any other problems. Most people in this country are not perfect in their physical and mental health.

The perfect person scarcely exists.

Blind people, as a group, get along as well in traveling as sighted people, and mostly what they need is to be left alone. They might need to ask where the jetway is when boarding a plane, or where the next concourse is located. Individual blind persons may even need to ask someone to give them a hand in finding a concourse. This type of thing was never regarded as a problem in the fifties and sixties, and is not regarded as a problem now. Such things are only incidentals.

For every ten billion passenger miles, you have one person who gets killed on an airplane. In all of the history of air travel, with the tens of thousands of blind persons who have traveled by air, there has never been an accident in which there has been some difficulty caused by a blind person exiting, or anything else. It just has never happened.

Reida: Let's go to some specific points. Airline safety officers say that blind passengers cannot sit in the window seat of narrow bodied aircraft because passengers must be able to look out the window to see if a fire is outside before opening the window. What is your comment on this rule.

President Jernigan: You may have noted in the most recent issue of the Braille Monitor that a pilot testified that a blind person would not be a hazard in the exit row. In fact, he stated that the best situation would be for both a blind and a sighted passenger to be in the row.

I would say that it is conceivable that in full daylight, with no smoke in the plane, other exits perfectly safe to get out of, plenty of time to get out of

them, a fire right outside the plane but not close enough that heat could be felt through the window—yet of such a nature that if you stepped out of the plane you might get burned—if the blind person was the only one in the exit row in such a situation, he or she might be at a disadvantage.

However, if you have a situation where it is dark (that happens), if the lights go out in the plane (that happens), if there is smoke enough in the plane to obscure the view (that happens)—if you had only sighted persons in the exit row, these sighted persons would be at a comparative disadvantage and a safety hazard. I do not observe the airlines doing anything about the safety issue in this situation. The only time on record that a passenger even opened a window when there were flames outside, was when a sighted person did it.

In this context I would like to say something else. The person who is able to get off the plane first in an emergency has the greatest chance of survival. Now, blind persons do not say that they should be the first off the plane. But there are rules made by some airlines which require that they sit in the window seat along the fuselage, and as far as possible from the exit row so they will not be a hindrance to other passengers.

It is not right to say to blind persons, "Other lives are more precious than yours. We will come to get you when everybody else has got off." The airline knows that the FAA says that if you are more than ninety seconds in getting off the plane, you may not get off. What kind of safety are we talking about? What kind of standard of humanity is it that says that you may ride on

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the plane, but we insist that you always have the greatest risk of getting killed. You are prohibited from even having the luck of the draw in having equal chance to get out alive. That's not fair.

Reida: Let's go to the floor level emergency exit, where aviation safety experts say that the three occupants of the exit row must operate as a team during a planned emergency exit, and that a blind person would have difficulty functioning as a part of that team.

President Jernigan: Blindness is not a factor in this situation. But there are some things that are. Women are allowed to sit in such exit rows. However, women (on an average) are not as physically strong as men.

Also, people who are sitting in the exit row and have been drinking are not as capable of functioning as those who have not been drinking. Yet, the airlines repeatedly, consistently, and as a knowing act serve liquor to persons sitting in exit rows until they are intoxicated, and sometimes even pass out drunk. Therefore, safety surely cannot be very high on their list.

On the other side of the question: If the lights are out, or there is smoke in the plane, a blind person might be indispensable because he or she is trained in the techniques of functioning without light. In such a situation, the average blind person would have a great advantage over the average sighted person. It is much more likely that it will be dark, or that the lights will be out, or smoke in the cabin, than that a blind person will have difficulty opening a door or that there will be a flame immediately outside.

Reida: Some of these arguments seem persuasive. Why do you feel that the airlines have not understood. Is it a problem of communication?

President Jernigan: It is not a matter of communication. We might like to think that it is. It is a matter of pride, a need to feel superior, a lot of things. The airlines would have you believe that, except in unusual circumstances, they don't serve liquor in sufficient amounts to anyone to make them drunk.

That is absolutely false. On any airline that you wish, you can get all the liquor that you want. I have never seen anyone refused a drink on an airline because they were drunk. It happens on every flight in this country. It is not random. On every flight—literally every flight—you will find people who are drunk on the airlines. Since this situation affects the ability of everyone to get off the plane in an emergency, you would think that the airlines would have the decency not to argue about safety. Or alternatively, not to serve liquor to passengers in exit rows.

However, they deliberately and knowingly do it. I tell you that the average blind person has no greater problem getting off that plane than the average sighted person. However, I think that there is no one in his or her right mind who would argue that the average drunk person is as able to get off as easily as the average sober person. That is just insanity.

So to come to the question—why the hoopla? What is it? I think that it is this. Everybody needs to feel superior to somebody. Airline personnel are no exception. Everybody loves blind per-

sons as long as they stay in their places, and are grateful when they are given things, and are very humble and bow their heads, and perhaps cry a little, and perhaps sing a religious song for you.

But when blind people begin to say: "No, we're citizens. We don't want to be unreasonable or militant, but we have the same rights as other Americans. We do not wish to be the objects of your charity and pity. More to the point, we don't want to serve as the means of slaving your conscience for the mangy things that you may have done. We want to pay our money and fly like anyone else and be left alone to do it."

When we take that attitude, you are going to find resentment on the part of airline personnel because they love to custodialize and feel superior, to show that they are able to boss somebody. For example, you will have airline personnel who will come to you and insist that you read an instruction booklet in Braille. If you don't, they will threaten and try to intimidate you. A blind man is sitting minding his own business when a flight attendant comes up and demands that he demonstrate and prove that he knows how to fasten his seat belt.

Reida: You feel that a major part of the problem is a certain arrogance on the part of airline personnel, a feeling of superiority, and a desire to custodialize blind people?

President Jernigan: I believe that everybody has a need to feel superior to others. A lot of people deny this, but it is a natural human trait. We try to keep it in check by a system of laws, traditions, and a lot of things.

But there are certain groups that are

fair game. You give charity to people that you feel superior to. People tend not to understand that about themselves.

Also, airlines cloak what they do in all kinds of high-sounding phrases. Safety is the modern "buzzword." If you are required to sit in a bulkhead seat, it is a matter of safety. If you are required to preboard, it is a matter of safety. If you are required to post-board, it is a matter of safety. If you are required not to sit in the exit row, it is a matter of safety. If you are required to sit in an aisle seat, it is a matter of safety. If you are required to sit in a window seat, it is a matter of safety. If you are required to sit in the back of the plane, it is a matter of safety.

Recently an airline made a rule that not only could blind people not sit in the exit row, but they could not sit in the row immediately before or immediately after the exit row. It was a matter of safety. Then, after discussion with the National Federation of the Blind, they said that they would remove the prohibition against blind people's sitting in the rows immediately before or after the exit row "as a concession" to us.

Well, was it a matter of safety or not? To remove it just to please us—what does that say? That you don't care about safety? Or, if you get pressured a little bit, you disregard safety? Or does it mean that it never was a matter of safety, and you put the rule in because someone thought it was a matter of safety?

Or did you base your judgment on what sighted persons could do if they closed their eyes? When the airlines wanted to test how well blind people could exit a

plane, they got sighted people, and had them blindfold themselves to simulate blind people. That's crazy. Blind people know something about techniques that sighted people blindfolded would be helpless to emulate.

Reida: Is there an alternate possible explanation for why airline personnel may have the attitude that they do? Being sighted, they share the general feeling that to lose one's sight is a terrible handicap, and thus blind people have a serious handicap. To offer help, therefore, may not be from a sense of superiority, but rather as a perception of need.

President Jernigan: It's the same thing, isn't it? You don't offer to help someone unless you feel superior to them. You don't offer to help people who are in as strong a position as you. It is a matter of airline personnel wanting to custodialize people and feel superior to them. If a flight attendant is rebuffed in an attempt to mother someone, it is sort of embarrassing. She is likely to lash out.

No group ever goes from second-class status to first-class citizenship without going through a period of hostility. It happened to the blacks. It happened in the women's movement. It happened with the Irish in this country. No group ever goes from subservience to full status in society without having people dislike them.

Reida: Recently a flight training instructor indicated that sometimes new employees, especially, will follow rules too literally out of a sense of insecurity. Do you feel that in such a case the attendant is being superior?

President Jernigan: You are just putting it a different way. Look, your

name is Reida. Suppose that we separate out all the people whose names begin with "R" and paint stripes on them, not to despise them, but so we can pity them. We make special rules for these people. Maybe the rules are not justified, but we think so. We also have a lot of people who are very literal at interpreting rules. They're new. They may have difficulty, but they mean well. Have patience with them. We are going to restrict you to certain seats and make you prove in general that you are not a menace to society. How would you like it?

Reida: I understand.

President Jernigan: The answer is—you wouldn't like it.

Reida: That's right.

President Jernigan: And we don't like it either.

Reida: The reason that I posed the question is not whether I—or you—would like it, but whether it makes any difference in strategy in changing something, if the motivations of the persons you wish to change are different.

President Jernigan: The reason that we have laws is so we can take the whim out of people's treatment of each other. It is an attempt to regulate and mitigate prejudice. You see, ultimately it would be better if you did not look down on blacks. It would be better if you did not feel the urge to try to dominate and bully. It would be better if you felt in your heart that it was not worth considering the differences between blacks and whites. Nevertheless, we have to have laws to deal with people like you, if that is the way you feel. Laws are not made to deal with majority situations.

Also, mostly people don't want to go

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out and kill each other. There are laws to take care of the minority who will want to do that. There are laws against burglary. Mostly, you are not going to go around and steal your neighbor's property. But if there were no laws against it, you probably would be encouraged to do so, and we all would be a lot less civilized. So we must have laws to take care of you if you have the urge to treat people in ways that you shouldn't.

We are going to do a number of things to change the situation. We are going to spark Congressional hearings. Also, we are going to bring this situation to the attention of the public. We have been long-suffering to a fault. We are going to raise the conscience and the consciousness of both the public and of blind persons. Blind persons, incidentally, are not uniform in their feelings about all this, as with any minority. You can find blacks who are willing to be just as subservient as they have been thought to be—as the stereotype dictates—less so today because there has been a long period of conscience raising.

We will raise consciences by public education. We will be sure to be aware of these things within ourselves. We will do it by laws. And selectively and reluctantly we will do it by confrontation. All four of these elements are essential.

Reida: Following up on this topic, you had an interesting quote in the Braille Monitor. You said, "We will win in the courts if we can—in the streets and in the forum of public opinion if we must."

President Jernigan: That's right.

Reida: Now you have just had a setback in the court with a verdict against you

in the US Air case.

President Jernigan: Minor. Incidental. Minor. We expect to lose most of them. One is all we have to win.

Reida: You will continue, reluctantly, to engage in confrontation?

President Jernigan: Of course. The reason that we will engage in confrontation is not because somebody is going to go out and plan to have a confrontation. Did you read the letters in the Braille Monitor?

Reida: Yes.

President Jernigan: You will notice that in the most dramatic event detailed in those letters the lady in question, after listening to the banquet speech at our convention, got to thinking about it. She had had to move twice before from an exit row seat when she had been so ordered. It hurt her. It humiliated her inside to be publicly hauled up and told that she had to move, when she knew that she shouldn't have to. That time she just couldn't do it.

So, unless we are prepared to say to our members, "You do not deserve equal treatment. Whatever anybody does to you, you must submit and tell them that you are grateful." Unless we are prepared to do that, we are going to have confrontations. When we say to blind persons that we are as capable of being as productive, good, and effective as other citizens, we deserve the same kind of treatment. When we do that, some blind people out there are going to decide that they have had enough. It was what happened with the blacks. It is what will happen with the blind.

Reida: Some other organizations of the blind are giving the airlines the impression that they are not doing so badly. Doesn't this create some con-

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fusion?

President Jernigan: What kind of organization is it? A very small organization which claims to be a big one, but if you would go to one of its conventions, you would see.

Reida: There is an organization for the blind offering consultation to one of the large airlines.

President Jernigan: That is the American Foundation for the Blind. It is not a membership organization, but an agency. It totals only about 100 plus people. It is made up of paid staff.

Reida: Still, to the outsider there seems a lot of fuss and turmoil. How do you approach the problem of the blind organizations disagreeing with each other, and thus maybe making it difficult for the airlines, as an example, to sort out who is right, and who isn't?

President Jernigan: America has the same problem with its foreign policy. The farmers have this problem with agricultural policy. Whether it is good or bad, you can't expect every blind person in the country to agree with every other blind person.

But beyond that, there is a strange concept abroad in the land. It wouldn't work in any other area, but people seem to want it to work with blindness. It shows what people think about blindness. It used to be the same with blacks.

Let's start with the blacks. People used to think that if any black person could be found to disagree with what, at that time, the NAACP was doing, it showed that blacks could be ignored, that they were in disarray and didn't know what they wanted. I got a black here who says he wants something else.

Or take the automobile business. You've got the car makers on one side.

That is one force, no matter what you call it. On the other side is the United Automobile Workers. Their interests may be the same in some areas, but in others they may not.

The American Foundation for the Blind has a vested interest in having blind people appear to be dependent. They live on the notion that they are taking care of blind people, not blind people taking care of themselves. If they have a blind person on their staff as a spokesman, it still doesn't change what I'm talking about.

Let's go back to the black analogy. If you have a black in the government, that black cannot speak for other blacks unless other blacks elected him or her. The fact that he or she is black doesn't change that fact.

The only major, truly representative organization of blind people in the United States is the National Federation of the Blind. Yes, you also have the American Council of the Blind. However, it is a much smaller organization which is dominated and controlled by the governmental and private agencies doing work for the blind.

I think that the attempt of airlines to get somebody who says they represent the blind, to take a counter view from ours, is an attempt to divert attention from the real problems that we are dealing with.

These problems won't go away because of that. One airline tried to hold a conference of such blind participants to try to "put the quash" on all this business, by making it appear that the National Federation of the Blind was an outside group, a bunch of little, sore-headed militants, and a small group.

That's all very fine, but the thou-

sands and thousands of blind people who travel are getting enough of this, and nobody is going to make them be second-class citizens. That is what has to be addressed.

Reida: Do I understand you to state that airlines have sought out other organizations, just to counter your efforts?

President Jernigan: I said that. It is my belief and understanding that they did that, and that the only reason that they stopped is that they might have been advised that it might be illegal to do it. That constitutes conspiracy.

Reida: I'm not trying to ask "hard" questions, per se, but rather am trying to get at the core of some of the differences which seem to exist.

President Jernigan: I don't mind if they are hard. I'm answering them the same way.

Reida: I have one more. There is the question of language which is sometimes used by the National Federation of the Blind. The use of certain adjectives...

President Jernigan: Look, before you tell me what it is, the language that we use is carefully thought out. We stand by it. We mean exactly what we said. We understood what we said. Whatever it is, if we said it, we meant it.

Reida: I understand. But from the point of view of pragmatism...

President Jernigan: We are pragmatists.

Reida: That I believe. However, to quote one example. You had Mr. Shane (Mr. Jeffrey Shane, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy and International Affairs, of the Department of Transportation) at your convention in Louisville...

President Jernigan: He thought that he

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had us.

Reida: ...and he is in a position to effect change.

President Jernigan: Which doesn't mean that we are afraid of him. He is a public servant, not a master.

Reida: I understand that, but in discussing him and his comments in the Braille Monitor, such words are used as "lame remarks..."

President Jernigan: I said that, I believe. They were lame.

Reida: ...that his remarks were of the same caliber as the rest of his reasoning...

President Jernigan: That's right. His reasoning was shallow. And not only that but, in my opinion, it was arrogant and high-handed. Add those to the adjectives. I said that, and I mean that.

Reida: I'm not trying to collect adjectives from you. I'm trying to get to a different point.

President Jernigan: You want me to see if I can't soften it up.

Reida: No, that is not the point I am getting at. Rather, my question is focused on what is the most efficient way for you to reach your goals.

President Jernigan: My goals won't be achieved by going hat in hand and begging.

Reida: The Braille Monitor says, "When he reads this, he will join his colleague, Mr. Murdock, in throwing a temper tantrum."

President Jernigan: That's right, temper tantrum! Murdock threw an absolute temper tantrum like a four-year-old child. A three-year-old would not have been capable of so much violence, and a five-year-old would have been capable of better judgment.

Reida: Now, your goals, as I understand them, are to get rid of prejudices which affect blind people and to get rid of the restrictions which prohibit blind people from living a full and complete life, without being bothered. In order to do this, you need to reach, educate, and secure the cooperation of a lot of decision makers in this country who have a role in some of these problems.

Mr. Shane would seem to be one of these people. You not only take issue with some of his comments, a legitimate thing to do, but also, it seems to me, you denigrate his intelligence, his honesty, and indicate that he is childish. From a pragmatic point of view, when he reads the Braille Monitor...

President Jernigan: I sent it to him. I intended him to read it.

Reida: Aren't you putting him in a position where it will be more difficult to reach him, educate him to your point of view, and influence him?

President Jernigan: What do you think that we need from him? Shane is not going to be our friend. He is not going to do justly by us unless he is made to do it.

He sat in on a conference with us about a year ago and promised to do things which he didn't do. I won't say he lied. Let's just say that he forgot what he promised to do. That is the kindest way to put it.

And, furthermore, he tried to threaten some of our people. He said I don't want any highjinks out there at the airport. Notice that he said I don't want any highjinks. If I find out that you are out there trying to block any planes, I will be the first one to come

out there and see if I can get you arrested. I—I—I. Well, that's tough. We answer it We, We, We.

In other words, I don't know whether Shane is an honest man or not. He doesn't behave in a way that I would like to see an honest man behave.

Reida: It isn't my intention to focus on Mr. Shane, per se, except as an illustration of the rhetoric of the National Federation of the Blind, which has sometimes been commented on. You point out that such language is carefully considered and deliberate.

President Jernigan: Absolutely. We say what we mean, and know what we say.

Reida: I want to thank you for the time that you have taken to talk to me. It has already been more than scheduled. I wonder if you might sum up with a final comment?

President Jernigan: Blindness does not mean dehumanization. We live in refutation of it every day. All of us are coming to realize that the problem is not blindness, but mistaken attitudes.

What blind people need most is admission to the main channels of daily life and citizenship. Not custody and care, but understanding and acceptance. Give us that, and we will do the rest for ourselves.

We are neither more nor less than normal people who cannot see, and that is how we intend to be treated. We want no strife or confrontation, but we have learned the power of collective action, and we will do what we have to do to achieve first-class status. We are simply no longer willing to be second-class citizens.

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## STILL MORE ON THE AIRLINES SAFETY HOAX

In the past few issues of the Monitor we have been reporting in detail on the rising crescendo of abuse and hysteria which increasingly characterizes the airlines' treatment of blind passengers. Regardless of how far-fetched and unreasonable the behavior of airline personnel may be, it is almost always done (usually with a straight face) in the name of safety. The word "safety" has come to be (in modern parlance) a buzzword. Presumably its use ends all discussion. Whether the requirement in question has any reasonable connection with safety is not to be challenged. Airline employees seem to feel that the mere use of the word is sufficient. And apparently it does not matter whether the "safety" deals with handling emergencies during flight, helping the blind person, making things better for other passengers, or simply saving the skin of the airline or allowing it to take out its frustration on the blind as a class for daring to press for equal rights.

A case in point is what happened to Holly Frisch of Washington, D.C., when on October 13, 1985, she called American Airlines to make a reservation. Let Monitor readers ponder her letter and see whether they can find any connection between the alleged airline policy and safety. Here, in the words of Holly Frisch, is what occurred:

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Washington, D.C.  
October 15, 1985

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Dear Dr. Jernigan:

Here is what happened two days ago when I made reservations on American Airlines to visit my family next month. I requested a bulkhead seat. Asked why, I said I would be traveling with my dog guide and prefer that location. The agent asked me to hold.

"I need to ask you a question," she said somewhat uncomfortably when she returned to the line. "Do you read Braille?"

I said I do and asked why she requested this information. She replied that now, if a blind passenger cannot read Braille, he or she must either be accompanied or fill out something called a passenger acceptance approval form. "We have to ask you a lot of personal questions," she added.

When I expressed my surprise and dismay, she said, "It's for safety reasons." I assume she meant the literature in the plastic seat pockets on the plane.

I am not writing because of any personal problem. I received everything I requested from American, including my bulkhead seat, one of the airline's special diet meals, the best possible bargain fare, and passage in the cabin for my cat as well as my dog guide. As you know, those last three items are available to any passenger, blind or sighted, who knows about them, how to ask for them, and the rules pertaining to them. I am writing because I am thinking of many of my blind friends who cannot read Braille right now, but who

have fine ears and minds with which to listen to and follow verbal directions. In many cases their inability to read Braille does not negate their adjustments to blindness. Some are too recently blind to have had the opportunity to learn Braille. Others do not have enough feeling in their fingers to make Braille reading really feasible.

Many of them cope far better with emergencies than I, who have read Braille with ease for at least twenty-five years. I know how degraded I would feel if I had to be accompanied by a baby sitter or nursemaid or to fill out a form so the airline could determine whether or not I could fly.

### AN OLD DILEMMA WITH A NEW TWIST

by Ramona Walhof

(Reprinted from the July, 1985, newsletter of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho.)

When I first flew in 1962, a passenger agent offered to take me on board before other passengers. He showed me to a seat right across from the galley, and he arranged for another agent to meet me at my connection in Chicago. All this special attention made flying very convenient and easy. Nobody objected. Gradually, however, attitudes began to change—both mine and the airlines.

As the years went by, I realized that many of these services were neither necessary nor helpful. If I wanted to talk with friends or family before departure, preboarding became a nuisance and a humiliation. Sitting in the bulk-head seats could also be a nuisance and made one a spectacle. Between flights, passenger agents did not always come on

time, which was an inconvenience. Worse still, a blind person was expected not to take a step without an escort. This was both degrading and inconvenient. Nevertheless, I tolerated all this until 1971 or 1972.

About the time the Federal Aviation Administration issued a notice of rule making with regard to handicapped persons on airlines, the National Federation of the Blind let it be known that it wanted to have some input into this rule making, and hearings were scheduled in several places throughout the country. Blind persons testified, and these rules were never adopted. Instead, however, individual airlines submitted similar rules to the FAA for approval. These often have been approved. It has taken many years of disagreement and confrontation, but the rule saying blind people could not keep their canes at their seats has been

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largely eliminated. The rule that said blind people must sit on blankets has been eliminated. Preboarding and escorts between planes are offered, but not required. There are still exceptional problems in these areas, but a very great deal of progress has been made. And still there is trouble.

Last fall two blind persons on two different flights on two different airlines were arrested because they refused to move out of their seats in exit rows where they had been assigned. Later, charges against one of these persons were dropped. For the other, litigation is still pending. This is not something that affects only a few way across the country.

Sunday, July 7, 1985, I boarded United flight 869 with my two teenage children. There happened to be several other blind persons on this flight returning to their homes in various parts of the country from the convention of the National Federation of the Blind. Not surprisingly, two blind persons found themselves seated in the exit row. Not surprisingly, airline personnel insisted that they move. Nadine and Steve Jacobson of Minnesota refused to move. What followed took about forty-five minutes. Various members of the flight crew came to speak with the Jacobsons. Finally, a policeman came. I could not hear what was said by the crew but I heard clearly what the policeman said. It was this: "You have a choice. Either move or get locked up." Many of the passengers were angry and impatient to continue the flight. Federationists were tired after a long and busy convention and anxious to return home. But Nadine and Steve Jacobson did what they had to do. We should all be proud of them. They re-

fused to move. Nadine spent part of that night in a cell locked up. Steve was deliberately separated from her. Their personal belongings were taken away. In short, they were treated like common criminals. All this because United Airlines doesn't understand. Although some of the sighted passengers on the flight were very angry, all of them respect the blind more than they did before. No doubt, the same can be said of officials of United Airlines. If pilots and flight attendants must strike for more wages and disrupt travel for thousands of people for months, then what little thing is it for blind persons to hold up one flight? But the stakes for us are much higher than a mere pay raise.

Why should we care so much about sitting in the exit row? The seats are no more comfortable. The chances of a crash are minuscule. So why are blind people willing to go to jail rather than move from the exit row? For that matter, why are airlines willing to cause blind persons to be arrested rather than let us sit in an exit row?

It has nothing to do with logic. If clear thinking is wanted, then it follows that no one seated in an exit row would be permitted to drink any liquor at all. Yet, liquor aplenty is served. If alertness is required, those seated in the exit rows might not be permitted to sleep. Such a thing has never been suggested. In an air emergency, the odds are extremely high that there would be a power failure. In such a case, an individual who is accustomed to relying on eyesight is most likely to panic and be ineffective at best. A blind person could function with or without light. Thus, logic dictates that blind persons

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should be seated in exit rows and shown how to operate the equipment. But logic did not create the problem, and it will not solve it.

The problem with the airlines has to do with attitudes toward blindness. Airline officials—like most of the public—think they know something about blindness. After all, they believe they couldn't function as they do without eyesight. It seems logical to them. It does because they have so little knowledge and experience with blindness. They do not think it is reasonable to sit down and talk to the blind about capacities and techniques. Although they would not say so, their actions and rules show that airline officials often think it is about the same to talk to the blind as it is to talk to a three-year-old. You do it for fun or you do it with charity. You do not take into consideration the views of a three-year-old when you are making policy for airlines, and you do not consider the views

of the blind either.

Or do you? This is the question now to be settled. Partly, it will be decided in the courts. Partly, it will be decided by the blind. Are we determined and willing to pay the price? Partly, it will be decided by the airlines. How long will it take them to accept the blind as normal, competent, first-class Americans?

Whatever it takes, we will continue doing what we must until the airlines will deal with us as first-class citizens. We will be labeled as troublemakers and militants. We know that short-term unpleasantness is better than being smothered with kindness or hate.

We know who we are, and we can never go back. All that is as true today as when Dr. Jernigan first said it several years ago. But there is more. We will move up in the world. Whatever it takes. The blind will be free and first-class Americans.

#### OF DISCRIMINATION AND SAFETY DEPOSIT BOXES

Wanda Pecher is a member of the National Federation of the Blind of Delaware. As with us all, her participation in the Federation heightens her awareness and gives perspective to her daily actions. She believes that she should have the same rights and responsibilities as other American citizens. She also believes that the Federation is the most effective vehicle

for helping her combat discrimination and change public attitudes.

Ruth Whelan is the President of the National Federation of the Blind of Delaware. She takes her responsibility seriously and recognizes the fact that the pattern of public opinion and behavior is created by the cumulative effect of individual acts and routine details. Recently she wrote the follow-

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ing letter:

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Felton, Delaware  
October 14, 1985

Mr. William Haughey  
Manager  
Bank of Delaware  
Dover, Delaware

Dear Mr. Haughey:

On October 4, 1985, a member of our organization, Mrs. Wanda Pecher, purchased the use of a safety deposit box at the Loockerman Street branch of the Bank of Delaware. She paid the \$18.00 fee and signed the appropriate card. After receiving her key and placing her articles in her box, she left.

On October 10, 1985, Mrs. Pecher returned to use her safety deposit box again. This time she was told that she had to sign a release which would relinquish the bank from liability for all of her articles in the safety deposit box. If she did not sign, she could not have access to the box. Mrs. Pecher was also told that (unlike the sighted) a blind person could not depuitize another person to enter the box except a co-owner.

When Mrs. Pecher asked if this was the general policy of the bank for all "handicapped" persons, she was told that the policy dealt with those who were "blind enough so as not to be able to see another person in the room."

Mrs. Pecher asked if she and her reader/driver could see such a policy statement in print and was told that policy statements were available only to employees and not to the general public

unless authorized by the bank's lawyers. Mrs. Pecher then informed the bank officer, Mr. Kirk Douglas, that such policy statements were a matter of public information. Mr. Douglas said he would have to contact the bank's lawyers but seemed unable to do so at that time.

Mrs. Pecher refused to sign the release and was denied access to her safety deposit box.

On October 11, 1985, Mr. Douglas contacted Mrs. Pecher by telephone and said he was returning her \$18.00 fee and that she must remove her belongings from her safety deposit box or that she "would hear from the bank's lawyers."

Mr. Haughey, if this is indeed a policy of the Bank of Delaware, it is blatantly and unjustifiably discriminatory. Blind people can and do manage their own affairs every day. We run our own homes and businesses and financial affairs. We are stockholders and stockbrokers, bank customers and bank employees, we are chemists, computer analysts, and teachers, homemakers, parents, and laborers. In short, we work and participate actively in the communities in which we live. We find many alternative and effective methods of doing our work and business.

The Bank of Delaware is as liable for the articles in Mrs. Pecher's safety deposit box as it is liable for the safe-keeping of the articles of any sighted customer of the bank.

It would appear that arbitrary decisions are being made by unqualified bank personnel concerning the capabilities of the blind. These same persons are also making arbitrary decisions concerning a person's competency. We are aware that the bank has the right and the obligation to question someone's competency.

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However, there are legal procedures to be followed. The decision is not to be a personal opinion. It is our feeling that these decisions are being made by ill informed personnel and are based on misconceptions, rather than facts about blindness.

This whole matter may be due to the misunderstanding of any overcautious or overzealous bank officer. If so, I hope my letter will help to restore things to order. I would appreciate a copy or a statement of the Bank of Delaware's policy in this matter.

We do not seek confrontation, Mr. Haughey. I would hope to see this matter settled in as amiable as fashion as possible. However, if the rights of

one blind person are being denied, it will affect all of us, so we will not back away from a confrontation if it is necessary.

Sincerely,  
Ruth Whelan, President  
National Federation of the Blind  
of Delaware

cc: Mrs. Wanda Pecher  
Mr. Kirk Douglas  
Senator Ruth Ann Minner  
Senator William Torbert  
Representative Thomas Carper  
Dr. Kenneth Jernigan, President  
National Federation of the Blind

## RICK SMITH BECOMES EAGLE SCOUT

by Kenneth Jernigan

As Federationists know, Frank Smith died of liver cancer September 25, 1985. At the time (early in September) that he learned he had only a few days left, he set about (calmly and with faith) the task of tidying up loose ends and finalizing his affairs. He called me to say goodbye and to tell me how much the Federation had meant in his life and the lives of his family. Until the end, he welcomed visitors and showed them by example what he was and what he believed.

One of the things he wanted to do was

to see his son Rick become an Eagle Scout. Although every effort was made to accelerate the ceremony, time ran out. Frank died two days before it happened. Pat Barrett, writing in the newsletter of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho, spoke the feelings of many:

New Eagle Rixon Smith  
by Pat Barrett

The Eagle Scouting award requires special dedication and accomplishments.

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A young man must attain high standards investing time and talent in a variety of fields, such as leadership in groups, outdoor survival, and community service projects.

Rick Smith was awarded his Eagle Friday, September 27, 1985, following his father's funeral. His Eagle project was using pieces of chicken wire and properly inserting barbed markings around tree bases on Boise's greenbelt. This work prevents beavers from damaging the trees along the Boise River.

Rixon belongs to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, which supports the Boy Scout program. In spite of this, scout leaders had questions

about how a totally blind youth could attain Eagle. Leaders were supportive; Rick and his family were determined; and he has earned Eagle completely. His ability and accomplishments match those of any other Eagle Scout. Rick has proved once again that it is not blindness that matters, but all the other characteristics and abilities that make up a person. Nice going, Rick. We are proud of you.

NFBI President, Norm Gardner, and former Idahoan, Bruce Gardner, have earned their Eagle awards in the past. Probably they were blind when they did it, but no one, including them, would have admitted it.

### SOCIAL SECURITY, SSI, AND MEDICARE FACTS FOR 1986

by James Gashel

At the beginning of each year there are several adjustments made in tax rates, exempt earnings amounts, Social Security and SSI benefit levels, and in deductible and co-insurance requirements under Medicare. Here are the facts for 1986:

**FICA (Social Security) Tax Rate:** The tax rate for employees and their employers during 1986 (effective January 1) is 7.15%. This compares to 7.05% during 1985. Self-employed persons will pay into Social Security at the rate of 14.60% during 1986 as compared to 14.10% during 1985. (Note: During 1986 self-

employed persons pay a direct Social Security tax of 12.3%. However, an additional 2.3% is paid to the Social Security trust funds from federal income taxes paid by self-employed persons).

**Ceiling on Earnings Subject to Tax:** Social Security contributions will be paid during 1986 on the first \$42,000 of earnings for employed and self-employed wage earners. This compares to the 1985 ceiling of \$39,600.

**Quarters of Coverage:** Eligibility for retirement, survivors, and disability insurance benefits is based in large part on the number of quarters of

coverage for which an individual is credited. Quarters of coverage are accumulated during periods of work, and anyone may earn up to four quarters during a single year. A quarter of coverage is credited based on earnings. During 1985 a quarter of coverage was credited for earnings of \$410 during a calendar quarter. Four quarters of coverage were credited for earnings of \$1,640, even if all of the earnings occurred during one calendar quarter. During 1986, a quarter of coverage requires \$440 of earnings, and four quarters requires \$1,760 of earnings, no matter when the earnings occur during 1986.

**Exempt Earnings:** The earnings exemption for blind people receiving Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits is the same as the exempt amount for individuals aged 65-69 who receive Social Security retirement benefits. The monthly exempt amount during 1986 is \$650. This compares to \$610 during 1985. Technically, this exemption is referred to as an amount of earnings which does not show "Substantial Gainful Activity." Earnings above \$650 per month for a blind beneficiary of disability insurance during 1986 will show Substantial Gainful Activity if no further deductions permitted by law can be made.

**Social Security Benefit Amounts for 1986:** All Social Security benefits, including retirement, survivors, disability, and dependence benefits are increased, beginning January 1986, by 3.1% over the amount paid in 1985. The exact dollar increase for any individual will depend upon the amount being paid.

Here are some average Social Security benefit amounts payable beginning

January, 1986: All retired workers, \$478; aged couple, both receiving benefits, \$812; widowed mother or father and two children, \$1,017; all disabled workers, \$483; disabled worker, spouse, and children, \$899; worker, reaching age 65 in January 1986, \$760; maximum family benefit for above worker \$1,330.

**SSI Resources Raise:** There is an annual raise, effective January 1, 1986, in the amount of resources permitted for SSI recipients. From 1974 through 1984 the limits were \$1,500 for individuals and \$2,250 for couples. This includes checking accounts, savings accounts, cash value of insurance, stocks and bonds, and similar assets. The 1985 resource limits were \$1,600 for individuals and \$2,400 for couples. Beginning January, 1986, the resource limit for individuals is increased by \$100 (from \$1,600 to \$1,700), and the resource limit for couples is increased by \$150 (from \$2,400 to \$2,550). Anyone who was previously denied SSI checks on the basis of excess resources should reapply if current resources are within these higher limits.

**Standard SSI Benefit Increase:** Beginning January, 1986, the federal payment amounts for SSI individuals and couples are as follows: individuals, \$336 per month; couples, \$504 per month. These amounts are increased from \$325 per month and \$488 per month paid to individuals and couples during 1985.

**Medicare Deductibles:** The basic deductible for Medicare Part A (hospital insurance) was \$400 during 1985. During 1986 the basic Part A deductible is \$492. This is the amount which an individual Medicare beneficiary must pay before Medicare's hospital insurance coverage takes effect during 1986.

Also, the Part A coinsurance amount for hospital treatment from the 61st day to the 90th day becomes \$123 during 1986, up from \$100 during 1985.

The Medicare Part B (medical insurance) deductible for 1986 remains at the

annual \$75 amount, just as it was during 1985. The medical insurance premium which Medicare charges for Part B coverage also remains at \$15.50 during 1986.

## THE RIGHT TO LITERACY

by Claudell Stocker

Topeka, Kansas  
October 18, 1985

### The Right to Literacy: Every Citizen's Right

Dear Dr. Jernigan:

I have been intending to write to you for some time now and thank you for helping me to see options I might have in making a decision as to whether I would stay in the field of rehabilitation teaching. I decided not to give in or give up but stay in and join with NFB for the strength I needed.

I was asked to speak at our recent NFB state convention in Wichita and felt afterward I would like to share with you some of the things I said.

Thank you again for helping me to renew my efforts in this field.

Sincerely,  
(Mrs.) Claudell S. Stocker  
Coordinator  
Communication Department  
Kansas Rehabilitation Center  
for the Blind

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Over a century and a half ago a young French lad named Louie Braille put together six raised dots that flung the door of literacy wide open for all people who are blind to become competitively literate with their sighted peers! Educators from all the world flocked to France to examine this method and take it home to their schools for blind children. Yet, in our own literacy-loving country of America, we face the shocking figure of twenty-five percent Braille literacy rate among legally blind citizens. How can this be true? I say blindness is no excuse for illiteracy. The only excuse anyone can have is 1) not enough intelligence to learn, 2) not wanting to learn, and 3) not having the opportunity to learn. It is number three that I would like to address.

Almost every state in this country currently has a rehabilitation or orientation center for the blind, all

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states run rehab teaching services to provide home study, and all states are mandated to teach blind children. The vast majority of the blind population became blinded in adulthood, and they are the vast majority of the illiterate blind in the USA. Modern science has provided surgery for cataracts, medication to arrest glaucoma, laser to delay blindness in diabetics, and is correcting and preventing blindness from birth defects in newborn children. However, this same scientifically oriented society is blinding more people in auto, hunting, and industrial accidents than ever before. For the past twenty-five years I have lingered as a rehab teacher in the quagmire of the aftermath of our society's handling of rehabilitation opportunities for those citizens who have become blind.

Twenty-five years ago, when I was a naive, optimistic young teacher, I asked my agency superior why there was only twenty-five percent Braille literacy among the blind and was given answers such as, "The field is young and underdeveloped—We haven't had time to develop good teaching methods or curriculum—There are no graduate schools to teach teachers—Money is a problem—Braille is difficult to learn—Some people are too old or too sick to learn—We have no certifying body to guard our performance." I was told to have patience and all would come about, and we would be able to raise the literacy rate.

Twenty-five years later I'm still waiting. But I'm tired of waiting and have become disenchanted with all the great efforts of science, the poor use of government money by rehabilitation programs, the failure of the certifying

organization to monitor agency programs, the little credence and political motivation of teacher's certification. I'm disillusioned that many graduate schools of O and M and rehabilitation teaching programs are turning out poorly prepared teachers. But perhaps I am most disappointed when I hear of newly blinded people remaining Braille illiterate because a blind or sighted rehab teacher has told them, "You only have to learn enough Braille to write the alphabet—Don't worry about Braille. You can use a tape recorder—You have diabetes and diabetics can't feel to learn Braille—You're too old to learn Braille." Such hogwash! If a teacher's attitude is such, no wonder young people coming into the field of teaching put down the importance of Braille. Any teacher, worthy of the name, realizes that Braille is the only true way a person who is blind can become totally literate.

Could it be that some of those teachers who hold such powerful and influential places in the lives of newly blinded adults and blind children are afraid to try better teaching methods or develop healthier attitudes towards Braille because they are, even unconsciously, trying to keep the blind in a subservient and dependent position? Such thoughts are so foreign to my thinking I sometimes want to go home and never return to my job as a teacher in a rehabilitation center. I tell myself my conscience will no longer allow me to be associated with such possibilities. But then if I quit, would my conscience be clear? Would I be happy to just put away twenty-five years of my life? If it is so all-important, why am I quitting? Quitting would certainly not

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raise the literacy rate.

It took me twenty-five years to realize that I had always had an "NFB" personality. It was time to join a group who would not tell me to, "Be patient; everything will be okay"—a group who would support me in demanding that agency supervisors hire teachers for healthy attitudes as well as college degrees—who would demand that we see each student as a success with potential to compete in the so-called "sighted world"—a group who would support me in research to discover better teaching techniques and to develop a more

successful teaching curriculum.

So after talking to numerous NFB members, whom I personally respected, I decided not to quit but join. I was never recruited or coerced to join, but as Dr. Jernigan told me, "If you feel this way, you might consider joining in our cause." I now feel, with new energy, that I shall continue every chance I have to speak out and challenge my fellow professionals to use every effort possible, to provide more and better opportunities for newly blinded people to master literary Braille and reach their right to literacy.

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#### **NONPROFIT POSTAGE RATES SAVED IN CONGRESS: THE FEDERATION LEADS THE BATTLE**

by James Gashel

Sometime in November (or maybe it was early December), 1984, news accounts of impending federal budget cuts being planned at the White House mentioned payments to the United States Postal Service as a target. The postal subsidies had survived an earlier challenge once before during President Reagan's first term of office. But now the battle lines over budget cuts would be drawn more tightly to reduce the federal deficit mounting up to over \$250 billion per year.

On February 4, 1985, the President's budget was released and sent to Capitol Hill. Not by accident there were also over 200 Federationists walking the

halls of Congress and making the rounds to talk to their representatives and senators about the contents of that budget, particularly the postal subsidy issue. We were right on the scene and very insistent that Congress act favorably to preserve taxpayer-supported postage rates covering mass communications (education and fundraising) by nonprofit groups and free matter mailings for the blind and physically handicapped.

The 1985 appropriation to the postal service fund for free and reduced-rate mailings was \$801 million. Under the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 the federal appropriation compensates the

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Postal Service for "revenue foregone" in connection with the free and reduced-rate mail services also required by the law. Otherwise, the Postal Service has to operate as a self-sustaining corporation, independent from the federal treasury. First-class postage is not subsidized, but certain second, third, and fourth-class mailings are paid for in part with federal funds.

This aid in the form of reduced-rate postage helps small newspapers, churches, charities of all kinds, environmental groups, labor unions, libraries, educational institutions, alumni associations, and even the national political parties, just to name a few. Many of the private agencies for the blind (in fact, most of them) use the reduced-rate postage to communicate with the public about their services and to do fundraising. In the case of the National Federation of the Blind we, too, conduct mass mailings throughout the United States in order to inform and educate the public about blindness, to improve the climate of public opinion, to convince employers to hire the blind, to find people who are blind or becoming blind so we can offer them our help, and to obtain financial support for our work. Most of the mailings we and others do would be too expensive if we had to pay commercial postage rates. Then our means of spreading the word, securing public support, and expanding our programs would be cut off. This would isolate the Federation and shrink or stop what we are doing.

Late in January, 1985, just prior to the President's budget message, the Postal Service announced that almost \$1 billion (\$980.9 million to be exact) would be needed to maintain subsidized

postage rates and free matter for the blind and handicapped during Fiscal Year 1986. Meanwhile, the President's budget called for only \$39 million, which on close analysis turned out to be a payment due from the federal government to the Postal Service Retirement Fund covering obligations to be met on behalf of postal workers whose employment with the Postal Service began prior to 1970. So the amount in the President's budget to pay for "revenue foregone" for free and reduced-rate postage was zero.

If Congress followed the President's recommendation, the Postal Service would begin charging commercial rates for all previously subsidized mail, commencing October 1, 1985. For example, the large packages of books that are mailed free from libraries to blind patrons and returned free to the libraries would have to be paid for at whatever the commercial rate would be for mailing the same package—maybe \$2.00 or \$3.00 per carton, or more. The Federation's mass mailings of print information would cost 12.5 cents per piece (third-class rate commercial rate) as opposed to 5.2 cents per piece (6.0 cents after February 17, 1985) at the federally subsidized non-profit rate. If a million or more pieces are mailed, the difference is very significant. Commercial postage would also have to be paid on each issue of the Braille Monitor, whether in disc or in Braille.

Sparked by the early visit to Washington and news of the crisis before us with the possible cutoff of reduced-rate postage, NFB members and leaders from throughout the country came alive. Collectively, we all understood that the free matter was never really in jeopardy. The price tag to provide that

service for Fiscal Year 1986 was quoted by the Postal Service as \$37,882,000. With \$1 billion at stake, that amount would be rather minor, and Congress could find the money. The real battle would shape up over reduced-rate postage for mass communications. The lower the federal payment for "revenue foregone" the higher the postage rates would be and conversely.

Hearings were held by the House of Representatives Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, Subcommittee on Postal Operations and Services, and by the Senate and House Appropriations Subcommittees directly responsible for approving the "revenue foregone" funds. I appeared in each of these hearings to represent our views and to advise the members of Congress on how the blind would be affected by a fund cutoff or a sharp reduction in federal support. Reprinted here is a transcript of my actual remarks before the House Appropriations Subcommittee. An expanded written statement was also filed for the published record of the proceedings.

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**Remarks Before the  
Subcommittee on Treasury,  
Postal Service, and  
General Government  
Committee on Appropriations  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C.  
April 17, 1985**

Mr. Chairman, my name is James Gashel. I am representing the National Federation of the Blind. I will make some brief remarks and ask that my full statement appear in the record.

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The purpose of the National Federation of the Blind is to serve as a vehicle for self-expression to give the blind a collective voice. We are not just some charity doing humanitarian work for the blind—we are the blind. The policies and positions we adopt are decisions made by the blind themselves through the process of collective discussion and vote. Today I will express our concerns relating to appropriations for the United States Postal Service fund known as revenue foregone for free and reduced-rate mail.

There is no point in beating around the bush, Mr. Chairman. We oppose the plans announced in February to balance the budget by terminating taxpayer support for special postage rates and the free mailing of books and aids to the blind and handicapped. As I have described in my written statement, there is a tremendous need to continue the revenue foregone appropriation to provide the special postage rates and services authorized by the Postal Reorganization Act. But the budget is a statement of national priorities which turns its back on human needs, not to mention some of the most cost effective ways of meeting those needs.

This budget calls for an end to taxpayer supported free mailing service to bring books, equipment, and information to the blind and physically handicapped. While it might be easy to publish such a proposal amid the pages of charts and tables created by the Office of Management and Budget, it will not be possible, Mr. Chairman, I dare say, to get the blind of this country and our friends to like it or to take it lying down. Obviously the budget writers do not understand or care that the free

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matter for the blind and handicapped provisions of the Postal Reorganization Act carry out the longstanding national policy of bringing books and information to the blind, since we have no other way of obtaining these materials.

But the free matter crisis is not the only issue. The plan to eliminate the revenue foregone appropriation entirely would also bring an end to much needed help and hope for the nation's blind. For instance, an organization the size of the National Federation of the Blind uses a very small portion of the revenue foregone subsidy. This is pennies to the federal budget. Yet, to our budget (the budget of the National Federation of the Blind) the difference is crucial. We cannot afford to sustain a doubling of our postage rates. It is a false and misleading distortion to claim that taxpayer savings will actually result from ending the postal subsidy. What about the costs to the U.S. Treasury that will surely increase because private sector programs such as ours cannot operate? In the space of only a few years, the National Federation of the Blind has helped to stimulate jobs and opportunities for thousands of our fellow blind who would otherwise live at public expense. I doubt that anyone (least of all the budget planners) would question that such privately sponsored assistance has tremendous value. But the budget writers do not weigh the costs against these benefits. If private efforts cannot flourish, then blind people will necessarily increase dependence upon government programs and financial support. If this happens, the cycle of tax and spend will start all over again. Surely it is not too much for groups such as the blind to ask that

affordable, stable postage rates be justified as a continuing public expense on the basis that they stimulate beneficial efforts that are paid for with private dollars.

Mr. Chairman, on page six of my statement there is the text of a short letter from someone who responded to one of our mailings. She is going blind and she is scared. She expresses the feeling of thousands of others who read our materials every day and gain hope from having them. I will read only this portion of the letter and then pose a question when I am through: "I don't have anything brilliant to say or any wonderful remarks about how brave I am. I am very frightened and just plain sick in my guts as to what I am going to do. I am 47 and live alone. I live on Social Security and have many other health problems. Would appreciate hearing from you. I need all the encouragement and help I can get. Many thanks."

Now for my question: What will happen to this individual and thousands of others if we have no way to know of their need or reach out to them to offer help? Now we can do so via the mails at a price we can afford. But what about the future? That is what worries us most. This is why we need a revenue foregone appropriation sufficient to maintain stable, affordable postage rates.

Mr. Chairman, I will conclude by thanking you for the opportunity to appear in these hearings on the 1986 appropriations bill. We appreciate your past support for the programs in question. If there are questions, I will be pleased to answer them. I thank you.

This is what I said to the Congressional Committee April 17, 1985; and as it turned out, our fears that Congress might actually go along with the President and cut off support for reduced-rate postage were not unfounded. It became clear that a complete termination of the funding to cover "revenue foregone" was possible when the Senate Budget Committee reported its version of the First Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 1986. The resolution and report, issued in late March, followed to the letter the President's recommendation. Something had to be done to stop this plan and continue the funding at no less than current levels.

Some groups affected by the cutoff vowed to beat it in the House, so never mind the Senate. But the National Federation of the Blind, joined by a handful of others, decided to make a stand head-on against the Senate Budget Committee's resolution. It is a good thing we did.

First, we had to find someone in the Senate to sponsor an amendment. That was accomplished when Barbara Pierce, President of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio, organized a meeting with Senator Howard Metzenbaum. We also invited representatives from higher education institutions in Ohio to attend the meeting with Senator Metzenbaum held in Columbus, Ohio, on April 10.

We decided to ask Senator Metzenbaum to be our standard bearer, which he agreed to do, then and there. He has been a close friend and ally of the Federation for several years. Senator Metzenbaum was our successful champion on the voting rights amendment in 1982. He spoke at our 1981 Convention when we rallied on the Capitol steps, and he

came to Minneapolis the following year to tell the Convention of the victory we had just won on voting rights. Senator Metzenbaum received an NFB "Special Service" award, recognizing him for his good work and successful efforts on behalf of all blind Americans.

Under the circumstances, and in a time of crisis, it was only natural that we would turn to our good friend, Senator Metzenbaum. He immediately agreed to help us, and we were off and running. The amendment to the resolution passed by the Senate Budget Committee sought to restore \$817 million to the budget in order to cover the appropriation for "revenue foregone." It did not provide for full funding, but it was certainly better than zero.

On May 9, as the Senate was only hours away from completing action on its version of the First Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 1986, Senator Metzenbaum rose and was recognized to present his amendment. It was immediately followed by a motion to table the amendment, offered by Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska. That was expected. Senator Stevens had developed what he called a compromise provision, intended to be incorporated in a substitute for the original budget resolution, calling for \$100 million for the revenue foregone authority. Senator Stevens said this would cover free matter for the blind and several other types of mailings. For other mailings not funded, Senator Stevens pledged to prepare legislation requiring the Postal Service to maintain reduced rates by paying for them from other postal revenues. That was an attractive approach—especially to Republican Senators, who could say that they were backing the

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blind and continuing to support reduced-rate postage, while still balancing the federal budget. So when the yeas and nays were ordered, Senator Stevens' motion to table the Metzenbaum amendment was agreed to by a vote of 51 to 46. Although the amendment lost, the show of support to continue funding for "revenue foregone" was impressive. Fortunately, the budget resolution in the House appeared to be in better shape. Backed by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, William Gray of Pennsylvania, the provision concerning "revenue foregone" sought budget authority of \$871 million, later revised downward to \$801 million as the budget resolution passed the House.

A conference committee of members from the Senate and the House took almost the entire summer (or so it seemed) to resolve their differences and report an agreement on the First Concurrent Resolution on the Budget for Fiscal Year 1986. But on August 1 the issues were suddenly settled, and the resolution was cleared for final passage by both Houses of Congress. As approved, the Budget Resolution uses the assumption of \$749 million as the authorized appropriations level for "revenue foregone," during Fiscal Year 1986. In order to establish this authorization as a technical ceiling on appropriations, the budget resolution directed that the \$749 million authorization of appropriations for revenue foregone be included in a later bill generally known as the Budget Reconciliation Act. A budget resolution by itself is only a guideline for the various committees of Congress. It is not enforceable as a matter of law, and it places no particular limits on

federal spending. Other laws must be passed or changed in order to carry out the assumptions made in the budget resolution.

Meanwhile, as the debate over the Congressional budget dragged on throughout the summer, the appropriations committees got down to work on their regular spending bills which are supposed to be enacted by Congress in order to become effective in time for the beginning of the federal fiscal year on October 1. In July, the House moved first by approving a bill calling for \$922 million as an actual appropriation for "revenue foregone." That amount would be enough to prevent a rate increase until after January 1, 1986, and then the increase would be about twelve percent.

But in the Senate Appropriations Committee, a very dramatic battle had developed. The Republican leadership was holding out for the \$100 million funding level adopted in the Senate version of the Budget Resolution. Meanwhile, supporters of "revenue foregone," led by Senator Quentin Burdick of North Dakota, called for 1986 funding to be \$801 million, the same as Congress originally enacted for 1985. As an aside, Congress had quietly increased the 1985 appropriation by \$168 million (to a total of \$969 million) in a supplemental appropriations bill which finally passed both Houses of Congress on August 1. But back to the debate over the 1986 bill. Senator Burdick and his supporters in the Senate Appropriations Committee prevailed on a vote of 17 to 9 after a tension-packed session.

That was the turning point in the Senate. Until then it was still possible that our special reduced-rate

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postage would more than double beginning in October, 1985. With the Appropriations Committee vote, however, the increase would not be more than 23%. And with the House vote for \$922 million, it was very possible that there would not be an increase in reduced-rate postage until after the first of January, 1986. Things were definitely beginning to go our way.

On September 7, the Board of Governors of the Postal Service announced a 23% rate hike for third-class nonprofit postage, effective October 1, 1985. Since Congress had not yet settled on the Appropriations which would become effective in October, the announcement was certainly premature. We decided to seek a delay with the objective of postponing the rate increase for at least three months, until after the first of the new calendar year. This way mailings during the 1985 Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday season would not suffer the impact of higher postage rates.

On September 19 leaders from several organizations affected by this issue met in Washington, D.C. President Jernigan was asked to chair the event. In addition to the National Federation of the Blind, which was heavily represented by NFB leaders who came from several key states, the other groups were the Council for Advancement and Support of Education, the American Society of Association Executives, and the Nonprofit Mailers Federation. At our request, Senator Ted Stevens of Alaska came to address the morning breakfast of the entire assembled group. Senator Stevens is chairman of the Subcommittee on Civil Service, Post Office, and General Services in the Senate Committee

on Governmental Affairs. He explained the direction he would like to go with respect to reduced-rate nonprofit postage. Then we told Senator Stevens our views about the whole situation. One item was the immediate plan of the Postal Service to raise rates beginning on October 1. As the diplomats would term it, we had a wide-ranging discussion of the issues of mutual concern and a frank exchange of viewpoint.

There is no use speculating or editorializing about the results we were able to achieve at the breakfast. Here it is, published in the Congressional Record of September 23, 1985.

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In the Senate of the United States: Mr. Stevens. Mr. President, recently I had the pleasure of speaking to a group representing four different organizations, one of which was the National Federation of the Blind. Their main concern was the impending postal rate increase for all nonprofit mailers. This increase is scheduled to take place on October 1, unless Congress directs otherwise.

One of the major problems that the nonprofit mailers face with a rate increase on October 1 is that most of the fundraising they will do for the entire year takes place between now and the end of the year, primarily during the Christmas season. The increase these groups are facing is in the neighborhood of 60 percent. Such an increase on such short notice will dramatically affect their ability to raise funds to allow them to do their work.

We ought to be both sensible and com-

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passionate about this problem. Therefore, Mr. President, I am introducing today legislation that would direct the Board of Governors to hold off any increase of postal rates until January 1, 1986, or in other words until after the holiday solicitation season. This legislation would apply to all nonprofit mailers, whether second, third, or fourth-class.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have the text of my bill printed in the Record.

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That was on September 23rd. Three days later, while the Senate was completing action on its version of the 1986 appropriations bill which includes the postal service, Senator Stevens offered his bill as an amendment, requiring the Postal Service to wait three months before raising any of the tax-supported special postage rates. The amendment passed unanimously. So there would not be a postage rate increase at all on October 1 or any time in the Fall of 1985, that much was for sure.

At the time this article is being written, it is still not possible to say exactly what the postage rate increase will be effective sometime in January, 1986. The rate hike will be 12%, 23%, or somewhere in between, depending on

how much money is actually appropriated. Meanwhile, reduced-rate postage remains unchanged under a continuing resolution, incorporating Senator Stevens' amendment and keeping all government programs running while Congress completes final action on the 1986 appropriations bills. It was a hard-fought battle to work our way up from a recommendation of zero (or a 108% increase in postage rates) urged in the President's budget. Although this may emerge as a future budget-cutting target, once again its success is less likely next time because of the victories and the support we were able to achieve in Congress this time.

Increasingly, the National Federation of the Blind has come to be recognized as a leading force among the highly respected national-level charitable groups in our country. Anyone who joins this organization and contributes money, time, and energy to its work can do so with real pride. We are effective in what we do because we are proud of our movement, our philosophy, and our leaders. Anyone who doubts that we have either the will or the strength to survive can come and test us out. What we lack in financial reserves we make up in people and commitment. Whatever the price, we will pay it. Whatever the battle on behalf of the blind, we will win it. That is why we have formed the National Federation of the Blind and why it continues to grow and flourish.

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## TO BE A PARENT

Gary Wunder is a Senior Analyst Programmer in the Department of Pathology at the University of Missouri Hospital and Clinics at Columbia, Missouri. He is the President of the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri. He is totally blind. He is also the father of an adopted daughter, Melissa, who arrived at the Wunder home April 25, 1984. Gary's wife Ruthann is sighted.

Patty Rasmussen is a blind woman who lives in Orange County, California. She and her husband Brent are both employed as programmers by Rockwell International. They have been trying to adopt a child, and (as might be expected considering the attitudes of the general public about blindness) they have been having trouble with a social worker. In fact, the social worker was about to close the case and not even do a human study when California Federationists took a hand. The human study proceeded, but a letter from a successful blind parent was needed as a reinforcer.

Gary and Denise Mackenstadt live in the state of Washington, where Gary is the President of the NFB state affiliate. The Mackenstadts know the Rasmussens. They also know Gary Wunder. Late in August Patty Rasmussen and Gary talked by phone. The following letter is self-explanatory and shows the Federation in action. If we do not help ourselves and each other, who will do it?

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Columbia, Missouri  
August 24, 1985

Dear Patty:

Thank you very much for calling this evening to inquire about blind people adopting children. I enjoy any chance to talk about Melissa and to relive those days of anxious anticipation. I should say that those days are fonder in memory than they ever were in reality. Waiting for a child isn't pleasant, and never before have I been in a situation where I wanted something so badly and had so little power to bring it about.

My wife and I got Melissa when she was four and one-half months old. We adopted her through Family and Childrens Services of Kansas City, Inc. Should you wish to speak with someone from that agency, you may do so by calling (816) 753-5280. The Director is Ms. Margaret McCorkendale, and I am sure she will be delighted to talk with you. Margaret visited with us two times after Missy's placement with us. The worker covering this part of the state was forced to leave the agency because of possible conflicts involving her full-time employment with the state of Missouri.

My wife, Ruthann, and I both agreed to use all of our vacation time separately when Missy arrived in order to increase the time for bonding. I took off the first six weeks and Ruthann took off the next four. This was a wonderful opportunity for me, because I was able to establish a close relationship with my

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daughter that many fathers don't get until their child is considerably older. Since both Ruthann and I have full-time employment, we do our best to share in the care of our daughter. There are no specific duties that fall to either of us. We simply do what needs to be done.

Being a new parent was both exciting and scary. I haven't found any part of it to be difficult, but everything is so new at first that one wonders at times how the child must feel about these new people who take twice as long as the veterans. Our child came after being in the care of an experienced set of foster parents. Experienced parents make up bottles before they are needed. Experienced parents don't start changing a diaper at one end of the house and then realize that the clean diapers and wipes are at the other end. Experienced parents don't dress up a child two hours before they want to show her off, and yes, experienced parents don't seek out bargain brand diapers unless they, too, wish to change clothes frequently.

You asked whether there are any classes specifically oriented to blind parents, and I think the answer is no. The techniques I use in parenting are the same ones used by other parents in my generation, be they blind or sighted. I do, of course, transfer the techniques I use to function as a blind person so that they meet the demands of being a parent. If I want to know where Missy is, I listen rather than look. I note that disposable diapers are wonderful because they make noise each time the child moves. This is often true even if Missy just moves her arm. I find I am constantly aware of Missy's location even though I now make no conscious effort to do so.

In terms of developing a technique for diapering, I was given a doll as a joke by some friends who knew Ruthann and I were adopting. Since I had never taken care of an infant before, I thanked them and bought a box of disposable diapers for it. We had already been given some second-hand clothing and I probably spent about half an hour repeatedly dressing and undressing the toy. I suspect some of that time was spent in developing a technique, but I know a good deal of it was just in doing something that made the possibility of having a child a bit more real and tangible.

I use no special techniques in preparing bottles. We have used all kinds of formula from powder to liquid. My preference is to make up seven or eight bottles at a time simply to get the chore out of the way. When Missy first came to us we heated all her bottles in boiling water. We soon found the microwave to be every bit as good, and we never find ourselves faced with the necessity of having to cool off a bottle that got too warm because the baby had another need that she felt demanded our immediate attention.

One thing I found frustrating for a time was feeding. I found that holding the child on my lap gave me a better sense of what she was doing. The problem we had at first was that I wanted to place my finger on her cheek to see where she happened to be looking at the time I was delivering the spoon full of food. Her reaction, however, was to turn toward my finger whenever she felt my touch. I soon found that I could use this technique to assure that her mouth would always be in the right place and simply deliver the spoon to that area.

That wasn't how I planned it, but why argue with success.

I have only one other suggestion about feeding. Feed a child with him or her wearing as little clothing as possible. I found that having Missy in nothing more than a diaper was ideal. In this case, who cares about a mess? There is nothing you can do (including spilling a spoon full of baby food) that can't be repaired with a damp cloth.

Since I work for a hospital and avail myself of every opportunity to talk with classes having some bearing on blindness, I am often asked by students how I will administer medication. My technique is simply to label each bottle of medicine with a tape containing Braille. If the instructions for administering it are complex, I write them down in Braille and file them. If I have reason to believe Missy will not wish to take the medicine, I mix it with something I know she'll like, such as a bottle of warm milk or cold juice.

One thing my daughter dearly loves is movement. This is fortunate for me because I love to walk. I have found a baby carrier very helpful because it leaves both hands free. This is a real plus when one hand must be used with the cane. Missy is very fond of the closeness afforded by the carrier, and when we first got her, there were even times when she demanded to be in it while we sat at home. The only problem I can see with it is that you can't take the child for a long walk and expect her to appreciate all the time you spent entertaining her. Missy usually goes to sleep, wakes up at the conclusion of the trip, and says: "Okay, my nap time is over. Now that you've had some time off, let's play."

Now that she is a bit older, Missy often does the walking for herself. Usually we hold each other's hand but that can be tiring after a time with her reaching so far up and me bending so far down. A child's harness is very convenient. It fastens about the arms and middle of the child and has a strap long enough to easily loop around an adult's wrist. Some folks believe it is degrading to have children on a leash, but for my money it's just good sense. I know where Missy is at all times, we are both comfortable, and no one will walk away with her without my noticing.

Having failed to think of other special techniques or problems to relate, I asked Ruthann for help and she came up with some things worth writing down. First, I have one heck of a time when taking Missy to homes not accustomed to visits from small children. If a house is not baby proofed, I either have to hold Missy on my lap throughout our visit, or spend all my time following her around to see whether she is eating a plant, turning over an ashtray, or eating a paper clip that someone left on the carpet. To be sure, this is a problem for all parents, be they blind or sighted. My wife, however, can do her policing from an armchair, while I must crawl around on the floor. None of this stops us from going, but it is something to be aware of and plan for.

Ruthann notes that I often tape special events using a standard cassette recorder. This is not for Missy but for me. She snaps pictures, and I record away. Whether we will ever listen to those childish noises or not I can't say, but the fun for now is just in the doing.

Both Ruthann and I love to read and

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hope to stimulate an interest in Missy. I read to Missy using Twin Vision Books. These books are written in both Braille and print so I can read and she can look at the words and pictures. These books are produced and distributed without cost by the American Brotherhood for the Blind. Since the Brotherhood makes them available widely throughout the country, you should be able to get them from any library serving the blind.

I can only think of one incident thus far that was made more difficult because I am blind. Several months ago Missy was ill and obviously had a temperature. I gave her some medicine and she went to sleep, but it seemed to me that her temperature was abnormally high. After thinking about all the problems that can result from a severe fever, I decided to call the emergency room to ask their advice. They asked if she had a temperature and I replied that she did. How much, was their next question, and I couldn't say. So it was that Missy and I found ourselves in a cab heading for the hospital at three in the morning. Her temperature: 103. Medical advice: Keep doing what you were doing.

After spending fifty dollars on a trip to the emergency room, I broke down and bought a \$100 audible thermometer. I thought it would be less expensive than the cabs and the doctors. To date I haven't used it once. A number of blind parents refuse to buy such devices because of their cost and because they can tell by touch whether or not the temperature elevation is sufficient to cause concern. I believe I can do the same thing now but feel better about being able to place a number on my concern.

That's about it as far as helpful

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advice. Feel free to ask me any specific questions I might have failed to answer. One thing that comes to mind is that there is a difference between specific concrete questions and a what if scenario. I have a friend who was terribly excited about our getting a child, but who lives in fear whenever he hears that I am alone with Missy. "What if you are carrying Missy and you fall and she falls on something sharp and you don't notice her bleeding and..." In the first place, I have never fallen when carrying Missy, the chances that Missy would land on anything besides me are slim, and the chances of her sustaining an injury serious enough to cause bleeding without my knowledge are zero. I understand that his concern is genuine, but that doesn't make it any more reasonable or worthy of worry.

Having exhausted my store of knowledge about being a blind parent, I now take this opportunity to relate my victories and defeats as a male parent. First, my daughter likes me and that, it seems to me, is a victory. Far too many fathers find themselves without friendly children until the kids are old enough to play ball.

Now my major defeat: I have a devil of a time with little girls' clothing. Dressing when you are a man is easy: all buttons go in the front, all buttons are on the right, all shirts have a label in the back so if they don't have buttons, dumb men still can wear them correctly. I can't find one rule that holds true for women. Not all Missy's clothes have labels, some button in the front while others button in the back. Some don't even have buttons. They look like something long ago discarded as a cleaning rag until they are magically tied around

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Missy's body, at which point they magically look like little girls' clothes. I'm becoming fonder each day of blue jeans and a simple shirt.

Please let me know if I can help in

any way. Best wishes, and please keep in touch.

Cordially,  
Gary Wunder

## IS INDEPENDENCE WORTH \$2.50?

by Fred J. Wurtzel

(Reprinted from the Summer, 1985, News from Blind Nebraskans, the newsletter of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska.)

Independence means many things, depending upon the context and the parties involved. Within the context of blindness, we can talk about two interrelated ways of expressing independence. First, is individual independence, and this is the one which most people think of when discussing the subject. The second comes close on its heels; that is, collective independence.

Unless you live alone on a desert island, it can be reasonably argued that freedom is for all or none. As long as one person is discriminated against or otherwise denied his or her constitutional rights, then no one is truly free.

Blind people, as a class, are certainly no exception. As long as one of us is treated unfairly on an airplane or in employment, none of us is free. This applies to our organization. The NFB must remain independent in thought,

word, and deed. The minute that we are beholden to any group or individual, we cannot act in our own best interest. One only need look to the American Council of the Blind to see the result of selling out. When the Council states, as they have to the Congress, that blind people need not be paid the minimum wage or, as they say in their new airline handbook, that blind people are inherently less capable of traveling, they are bowing to the master of their purse strings, the agencies which have a vested interest in keeping blind people dependent and subservient.

When the NFB goes to the Congress or the courts, we have only one interest to promote, our own. We can speak clearly and loudly for what is best for blind people. As our President has so eloquently stated, "We know who we are." Our identity is not distorted by the clash of conflicting goals.

Our clear identity is made possible in large part because of our financial independence. We are willing to "put our money where our mouth is." With candy sales and various thons, we turn

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energy into cash. These fund-raisers are very important locally, but they do not fully meet the national need.

We have developed a simple and dependable fund-raiser, which uses little time and energy to raise significant amounts of money for us. It is called the Pre-Authorized Check Plan, or PAC Plan, as it is known.

Last year the PAC Plan raised around a quarter of a million dollars! Over one thousand people have joined up. This is money that we can use to fight our battles and change what it means to be blind without, in any way, compromising

our principles and goals.

You might ask how you can become a part of this approach to building and maintaining our independence. It is simple. Fill out a PAC card, sign it on the raised lines in two places, void a check, and mail it to our National Center, or ask me to help you. I, any officer of the affiliate, or any other Federationist who knows how will be most happy to assist.

Help us all keep our collective and individual independence. Join up today. You can contribute as little as \$2.50 a month. Isn't it worth it?

## WHAT WAS THAT CLICKING AND CLACKING ANYWAY?

by Fred J. Wurtzel

(This article appeared in the Summer, 1985, News from Blind Nebraskans, the newsletter of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska. It underscores the increasing emphasis which the National Federation of the Blind is giving to involvement of the deaf-blind in our movement.)

If you were at our national convention and if you happened to the back of the hall for one reason or another, you probably heard some unusual clicking and clacking sounds. You may be wondering what that noise was. It was the sound of Teletouch machines translating or, more properly stated, interpreting the

convention to some of our deaf-blind members.

We have a national committee concerned with issues of deaf-blindness. One of the things the Committee did at this year's convention was to put on a class to teach finger spelling, a form of sign language useful in communicating with most any deaf person, including deaf-blind people. The Committee also acted to form a national NFB network to reach out to deaf-blind people and involve them in NFB chapters wherever they live throughout the country. By next year's convention, it is hoped that every state will have a coordinator for this purpose.

You might ask how we, here in Nebraska, can involve deaf-blind people in our local chapters. It is rather simple, only requiring the will to do so and some deaf-blind people to join. There are deaf-blind people all across Nebraska. So all that is left is for us to put forth the effort.

Anyone who can use a Braillewriter or a typewriter can use a Teletouch to interpret. Finger spelling can be

learned in a very short time. I know. I learned at the workshop at the convention and was able to communicate! I admit that I still have a long way to go to be very fast; but nevertheless, I can do it. It is my goal to have someone in each chapter here in Nebraska willing to learn the skills and do the work to find deaf-blind people who are interested in the NFB.

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If you or a friend would like to remember the National Federation of the Blind in your will, you can do so by employing the following language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath unto National Federation of the Blind, 1800

Johnson Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21230, a District of Columbia nonprofit Corporation, the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ (or "\_\_\_\_\_ percent of my net estate" or "The following stocks and bonds: \_\_\_\_\_") to be used for its worthy purposes on behalf of blind persons."

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## SPEECH OUTPUT FOR THE IBM PERSONAL COMPUTER

by Curtis Chong

(As a general practice the Monitor tends to avoid articles that are technical in nature and aimed at a specific group. However, the computer has poked its terminal into so many corners of our lives that a discussion of its vagaries and mysteries is both timely and relevant. The blind have access to more print material today than ever before in history, largely because of the computer, but many blind persons do not have the necessary data to get the tools and take advantage of the opportunities which they can now have. This is why we are carrying this article. Curtis Chong is one of the leaders of the NFB of Minnesota. He is also the President of the National Federation of the Blind in Computer Science. In a recent letter to President Jernigan he said in part:

"One of the biggest problems with the speech software market for the IBM PC is that it changes too rapidly. The information printed in Computer Science Update, the newsletter of the NFB in Computer Science, is already out of date.

"In order somewhat to rectify this problem, I have prepared a separate reprint of the article on speech output for the IBM Personal Computer. A copy of that reprint is enclosed for your information.

"It is my belief that readers of the Monitor would find the article of interest. However, I have some concern

that the information which it contains may be out of date by the time it is reprinted. If nothing else, however, the article does give the reader a fairly comprehensive list of the vendors of speech software for the IBM PC. If you decide that is appropriate to use the article in the Monitor, please encourage people to contact the NFB in Computer Science for current information about specific software."

The address is: Curtis Chong, President, NFB in Computer Science, 3530 Dupont Avenue, North, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55412.)

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Author's Note: The speech software market for the IBM Personal Computer is in a constant state of flux. Already, another speech software package has entered the market: Soft VERT from Telesensory Systems, Inc. (TSI). As of this writing, I have not had an opportunity to fully evaluate the product. However, I do know that TSI is selling Soft VERT for \$750. Observe that Soft VERT is definitely the highest priced speech software package on the market for the IBM Personal Computer. However, Soft VERT is loaded with features—features that some people might want and others might not. If you want additional information about Soft VERT, contact Telesensory Systems, Inc., 455 North Bernardo Avenue, P.O. Box 7455, Mountain

View, California 94039-7455, Phone:  
(415) 960-0920.

I have received many calls from people wanting to know about speech output packages for the IBM Personal Computer (PC). Blind people are being exposed to the PC in a wide variety of work and educational environments, and the word has spread across the country that generalized speech output software exists to make the PC talk. What people don't know, however, is who markets these packages, which package is "the best," and will these packages allow you to use any program that can run on the PC.

Speech output for the IBM PC essentially consists of two items: the speech synthesizer that actually does the talking plus the software that actually tells the PC what to send to the synthesizer.

#### SPEECH HARDWARE FOR THE PC:

Two brands of speech synthesizers are worth considering—especially, if you are paying for the equipment with your own funds. The Echo brand of speech synthesizer is manufactured by Street Electronics and costs about \$250. Votrax currently markets two speech synthesis systems: the Type 'N Talk and the Personal Speech System (PSS). Although the Type 'N Talk is cheaper than the PSS, and although it has a speech rate control knob on the front panel, I do not recommend it. This is because there is no way to programmatically kill speech output. On the other hand, the Votrax PSS and the Echo will accept a command from the computer which instantly stops speech output.

The Votrax PSS and the Echo can both be purchased from a single outlet. Sense-sations (919 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107 (215) 627-0603) carries both the Echo and the PSS as well as other speech synthesis systems. Sense-sations has done what it can to keep your costs down.

Before deciding between the Echo or the PSS, you may want to keep these things in mind:

1. The Echo synthesizer is cheaper than the PSS. The PSS costs about \$350, and the Echo costs about \$250.

2. The speech produced by the Echo is more metallic and less like a human voice than the PSS.

3. This is offset by the fact that the Echo is a more responsive synthesizer than the PSS: it introduces no appreciable delay due to carriage returns, and you can cause it to speak as little as .2 seconds after receiving the last character that was not a carriage return.

4. On the other hand, the PSS has more sophisticated speech logic built in. The PSS can store an exception table to control how specific character strings will be pronounced. In addition, the PSS sounds more human-like; and for those of you who like to play with sound effects, you can program the PSS to play tunes.

5. The Echo will automatically spell character strings that do not contain vowels (e.g., NFB). The PSS will not.

#### SPEECH SOFTWARE FOR THE PC:

One of the most gratifying things about the rapid proliferation of the microcomputer has been the tremendous development of speech software packages

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for the IBM PC. Today, no less than six speech packages are available for the PC. This means that you, the consumer, can pick the package that best meets your needs instead of having to rely upon one or two companies to provide you with something that really doesn't help you or, perhaps of greater concern, far exceeds your budget.

Before looking at each package, here are a few questions that you should keep in mind:

1. How much does the package cost? How much does it cost to receive future releases of the product? Is there a maintenance fee that must be paid so that you can receive help from the vendor?

2. What speech synthesizers are particularly well suited to the package?

3. Does the package have a "Review Mode"—that is, can you use the package to hear data displayed on the video monitor? If Review Mode is provided, is it possible to set up sections of the screen or "windows" that limit what is spoken? What features are provided, in or out of Review Mode, to help you move your real (system) cursor to the location of your reviewing cursor? What are some of the other significant features provided?

4. How does the package handle punctuation? Are multiple levels of punctuation provided that will allow you to hear some special characters in one level but not in another?

5. How are upper case or capital letters detected?

6. What features are provided to enable the package to speak automatically whenever the computer sends something to the video monitor?

7. What keys on the keyboard are used

to control the package, both in and out of Review Mode? For those keys used outside of Review Mode, what is the likelihood that they will interfere with the normal operation of the application program that you are running?

8. To what extent does the package function on IBM PC compatibles?

9. How does the package work with terminal emulation software such as the Irma or Ideacomm systems used for IBM 3278 terminal emulation?

10. Can the package be tailored for specific speech synthesizers, baud rates, and communication ports?

Six companies are marketing speech output software for the IBM PC—software that costs anywhere from \$395 to \$500. The packages, listed in alphabetical order, are as follows: Enable Reader (marketed by Enable Software), Enhanced PC Talking Program (marketed by Computer Conversations), Freedom1 (marketed by Interface Systems International), PC Speak (marketed by Mark Enterprises), PC Voice (marketed by ARTS Computer Products) and Screen-Talk (marketed by Computer Aids).

The address and phone number of each company will be listed at the end of this article. In the meantime, let me say that three of the six companies did exhibit at this year's National Federation of the Blind Convention: Computer Conversations, Interface Systems International, and Computer Aids. ARTS Computer Products made a deliberate choice and did not appear at our convention. Enable Software did not finish the PC version of its Enable Reader in time to make the convention. As for Mark Enterprises, the sole proprietor of the company, Arnie Miller, was unable to attend our convention because of his

regular full-time job.

Now, let's look at each package and see how it stacks up against the questions listed above.

**ENABLE READER:** This package, marketed by Enable Software, is the newest speech output system for the IBM PC. It costs \$500. I have no information about costs for future versions or possible maintenance fees.

Enable Software states in its literature that three versions of Enable Reader are available: one for the Votrax PSS, one for the Echo, and one for DECTALK (a high quality speech synthesis system that costs about \$4,000). You, the customer, must tell Enable Software what synthesizer you want the software to work with when you place your order.

The Enable Reader software provides fifty separate commands in its Review or "Reader" Mode. In Review Mode, you can move quickly around the screen. Keys are provided to enable you to "jump" to a specific line and column. In Review Mode, you can set up windows and read within a window either one line at a time or the entire window. In Review Mode, you can determine the location of your system cursor only when you first enter the mode; once you start moving about the screen, the location of the system cursor is lost. Outside of Review Mode, no provisions are provided for using the software. In order to move your system cursor to a possible mistake, you must first find the mistake in Review Mode, remember what row and column the mistake was on, exit Review Mode, and move your system cursor to the desired location. By the way, you may want to know that Enable Reader announces the location of the cursor assuming that the top left corner of the

screen is line 0, column 0. The bottom right corner of the screen is referred to as line 24, column 79. It is important that this method of announcing the cursor location be understood as it is not used by most of the speech output systems being marketed today. Most speech output systems sold today assume that the top left corner of the screen is line 1, column 1.

Enable Reader provides you with five levels of punctuation. Also, you can set up something called a punctuation filter which allows you to suppress the pronunciation of specific punctuation characters.

Capital letters are indicated by the word "upcase." In fact, you can turn the detection of upper case letters on and off.

Enable Reader intercepts normal DOS system calls and causes data sent to the screen to be spoken automatically. Many programs, however, write data directly to the video buffer, and Enable Reader does not automatically speak data sent via this method. However, you can use Review Mode to get the information you need from the screen.

Enable Reader provides a keyboard intercept feature which enables it to echo the keystrokes you type in even though data being sent to the screen may be bypassing the normal DOS function calls. You can choose either to hear each character as you type it or you can set up a delay factor for as little as .5 seconds—meaning that nothing will be spoken until .5 seconds after you have stopped typing. Using the appropriate delay factor, you can hear what you type as words rather than individual characters.

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Outside of Review Mode, Enable Reader

only recognizes the Control-Right-Shift key. This key is used to place the program into "Reader" Mode which is the Mode you use to scan the screen. In this mode, it is impossible for Enable Reader to damage anything on the screen. No function keys or cursor movement keys are used by Enable Reader in Review or "Reader" Mode. Instead, the program recognizes the normal alphabetic, numeric, and punctuation keys as command keys. Of particular interest is the "identify" key which enables you to find out what each specific key on the keyboard is expected to do when pressed. As far as conflicting with other software, there is some possibility that the Control-Right-Shift may be required by your application program. If so, there is some possibility that Enable Reader will not function.

Enable Software has stated that it would like Enable Reader to become a standard for all 16-bit machines. This implies that Enable Reader will work on a lot of PC compatibles. However, I have received no definitive information from the vendor regarding this.

No information is available at this time regarding Enable Reader's performance with terminal emulation systems. The product is so new that not enough time has passed for experience to be gained in this area.

As I said earlier, Enable Reader can be delivered in three versions for three different speech synthesizers. However, I do not believe that you can tailor a specific version to work with another synthesizer except by programming certain keys in Review Mode each time you start up the program.

Enable Reader communicates with your synthesizer through COM1 at 9600 baud.

No provision is made for you to change these settings.

**ENHANCED PC TALKING PROGRAM:** Marketed by Computer Conversations, this package costs \$500 prepaid and \$700 with purchase order. However, the owner of the company, Ron Hutchinson, says he will negotiate a lower price for any blind person whose circumstances do not permit payment of the full price.

The Enhanced PC Talking Program is the only one of the six packages that permits you to obtain information about data on the screen without having to use a "Review Mode." This "Interactive Mode," as the vendor calls it, enables you to deal with the display in "real time." Using the Enhanced PC Talking Program, it is rarely necessary to go through the cumbersome exercise of synchronizing the system cursor with a reviewing cursor. In real-time mode, you can determine the location of the system cursor, read the current line (or any other line on the screen, for that matter), read predefined windows on the screen, and read from the cursor position to the right.

The Enhanced PC Talking Program has a feature that enables you to determine the visual characteristics of data being displayed on the screen. With this feature on, you can detect highlighting; low, normal or high intensity characters; and reverse video.

The Enhanced PC Talking Program works with both the Echo and the Votrax (both PSS and Type 'N Talk). Also, it can be configured to work with the DECTALK.

By using a feature called "Roaming Reader," it is possible for you to move a reviewing cursor around the screen to hear what is being displayed. It is possible to place a marker at the loca-

tion of the cursor which can then be used to define the upper left and lower right corners of a subset of the screen. Through the use of the Left, Right, Up and Down Arrow keys, the program will speak each character the system cursor lands on, thereby providing you with a talking system cursor in real-time mode. This makes it easy to correct mistakes, for example, in a word processor. What you hear is where you are.

The Enhanced PC Talking Program supports one level of punctuation detection. Punctuation pronunciation is either on or it is off. Blanks are not pronounced by this mode. Blanks are spoken either by turning on a special blank pronunciation mode or through the use of the cursor control keys—that is, the talking cursor.

If the cursor control keys are used to move about the screen, the word "cap" is used to indicate a shift from lower to upper case. When the program encounters a shift in the opposite direction—upper to lower case, the word "lower" is used. One mode of operation tells you automatically whenever there is a case shift in the middle of a word.

Like the Enable Reader, the Enhanced PC Talking Program intercepts normal DOS function calls, thereby automatically speaking data sent to the screen via this method. The Enhanced PC Talking Program will not automatically speak data sent to the screen by programs that write directly to the video buffer. However, judicious use of the "Roaming Reader" and the other interactive functions of the program can help to alleviate this problem.

The Enhanced PC Talking Program can echo individual keystrokes like Enable Reader. You can also set it up to echo

individual words instead of individual characters. In other words, as you type, the program sends the individual keystroke to the synthesizer. No carriage return is sent to force the synthesizer to speak until you hit either a space or a punctuation character.

The Enhanced PC Talking Program makes use of the function keys, the cursor movement keys and the Tab key (among others) both in and out of the "Roaming Reader." In its default mode, the program makes use of the Function keys to execute various tasks such as the announcing of the cursor location, announcing the contents of the current line, etc. If the application you are running requires the Function keys, it is a simple matter to switch the Enhanced PC Talking Program to use the Alt Function keys. If you would prefer to continue operating the program with the Function keys and your application must receive a Function key to carry out a request, you can hit the F10 Function Key twice, then the Function key you want to be passed to your application. This means that under no circumstances will keys used by the Enhanced PC Talking Program conflict with keys required to run your application.

As of this writing, the Enhanced PC Talking Program works on about 50 IBM PC compatibles. For specific information about which computer the program will run on, you should contact the vendor.

Computer Conversations has done a fair amount of work with IDE Associates. Consequently, the Enhanced PC Talking Program works well with the IDEACOMM 3278 emulation system. Computer Conversations also has available a package that enables the IBM PC to emulate a DEC

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VT100. This, too, works with the Enhanced PC Talking Program.

The Enhanced PC Talking Program will communicate with your speech synthesizer either through COM1 or COM2. However, the baud rate must always be set at 9600.

FREEDOM1: Marketed by Interface Systems International, this program is priced at \$499.

Freedom1 was designed to work specifically with the Votrax Personal Speech System (PSS), and a special version has been developed for DECTALK. I am told by the vendor that the newest version of the program will come with an installation procedure that will enable it to work with other synthesizers (e.g., the Echo).

Unlike all of the other packages discussed here, Freedom1's only purpose in life is to act as a highly sophisticated screen reader. All of its functions are executed in Review Mode. In Review Mode, you can define subscreens—that is, the upper left and lower right corners of areas, the locations of which can be saved on a disk file. The newest version of the program has a feature called "cursor joining" which permits the program to move the system cursor to the location of the reviewing cursor. However, you should be aware that this feature is not guaranteed to work with all programs. Freedom1 comes with a "find" command which permits you to locate a character string on the screen—either by searching forwards or backwards from the current reviewing cursor location. In the latest version, it is possible for you to "program" keystrokes so that multiple Freedom1 commands may be executed with a single keystroke. Like Enable Reader, Freedom1

announces the location of the cursor assuming that the top left corner of the screen is line 0, column 0.

Freedom1 comes with a punctuation mode that you can turn on and off. Another function must be turned on if you wish to hear spaces spoken. Freedom1 also comes with a "numerics" mode which will convert strings of numbers into full words. For example, with this mode turned on, the string "9999999" will be pronounced "nine million nine hundred ninety-nine thousand nine hundred ninety-nine."

Upper case letters are indicated by a spoken word rather than raising the pitch of the speech.

Freedom1 is, if nothing else, a sophisticated screen reading program. No provision is made in the software to automatically speak system responses. There is no way to have individual keystrokes or words echoed when you type them in. Everything that Freedom1 speaks is initiated by a specific request from you, the user.

Outside of Freedom1's Review Mode, only the Tilda key is recognized—that is, the program remains passive until this key is pressed. Once you have depressed the Tilda key, the program gains control, and numerous keys become available for executing the numerous reading functions and modes that are available. To exit the program and return to your application, simply press escape.

While under Freedom1's control, commands can be executed from the home keys. With simple keyboard commands, you can, among other things, instruct Freedom1 to find a character string (forwards or backwards), move to and say the next word (also forwards or back-

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wards), or to move forwards or backwards one character at a time.

The Tilda key is used to put you into Review Mode—which is the only mode in which the program operates. Therefore, the Tilda key is not available for use by other applications you may have running on your PC. No other keys used by Freedom1 will conflict with other applications.

I do not know how many PC compatibles can run Freedom1; however, I do know that there are some. If you want more specific information as to which PC compatibles will run the program, you should contact the vendor.

No information is currently available about how Freedom1 runs with terminal emulation systems other than the fact that it does not now run with the Irma 3278 emulation system. In the first version of Freedom1, data could only be sent to your synthesizer through COM1 and at 9600 baud. No information is available as to whether the new version (released in July, 1985) will provide greater flexibility.

PC SPEAK: PC Speak is marketed by Mark Enterprises and sells for \$475. It was the first speech output package developed for the IBM PC.

PC Speak is designed to work with a number of speech synthesizers including Echo, Votrax, Intex, and Microvox. However, this only means that different control sequences are transmitted to the speech synthesizer when the program is started up. During normal operation, PC Speak behaves the same way for all synthesizers. This means that you cannot use the program to accomplish such tasks as varying the speech rate, raising or lowering the pitch or stopping speech. However, as you will see later,

it is possible to overcome this problem to some extent.

PC Speak intercepts normal DOS function calls, thereby providing some form of automatic speech. It has a Review Mode which is entered by pressing Control-Numlock. No provision is made for the creation of windows or subscreens. There is also no simple way to bring the system cursor to the location of the reviewing cursor. PC Speak can be set up to echo individual keystrokes—that is, to intercept data as it is entered from the keyboard. This enables the program to echo individual keystrokes even when you are running a program that writes directly to the video buffer. In Review Mode, you can obtain information about the status of the Insert, Shift, and Numlock keys.

PC Speak has a unique way of handling the pronunciation of special characters (e.g., period, comma, exclamation point, etc.). Ordinarily, no punctuation characters are spoken. However, the program comes with a set of character substitution tables that tell it to convert specific characters into a string that will sound like something meaningful. Using character substitution tables, you can easily control what characters PC Speak will pronounce and how PC Speak should pronounce them. For example, if you are running a word processor, you might want PC Speak to pronounce a "-" as "hyphen." In a spread sheet program, you might want "--" pronounced as "minus."

The Character substitution tables can be used to program command sequences to your speech synthesizer. You can choose characters above ASCII 128, for example, and set each one up to convert to a string of characters that will cause the

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synthesizer to perform the desired function.

Upper case letters are indicated by the word "capital" spoken before a specific letter. You must request specifically that a word be spelled in order to hear upper case characters within it. Outside of Review Mode, Control-Numlock is the only key really recognized by PC Speak. Control-Numlock places you in Review Mode, at which point the cursor control keys and the tab key can be used to move you around the screen. You can have individual lines, words, or characters spoken in Review Mode. This architecture means that the keys used by PC Speak will not conflict with any application you may be running.

Mark Enterprises makes no claim that PC Speak will work on any PC compatible. In fact, Mark Enterprises states specifically that PC Speak will run only on the IBM Personal Computer—which does, by the way, include the IBM PC/XT.

As far as I know, very little effort has been expended to get PC Speak to run with any terminal emulation system. There is some indication that PC Speak may work with the latest version of the IDEACOMM 3278 terminal emulation system.

PC Speak has a highly flexible system for controlling the communications path to the speech synthesizer. Using a control file read at program startup time, you can tell PC Speak to communicate with the synthesizer through any parallel or serial port; and if a serial port is being used, the baud rate, parity, and number of stop bits can be controlled.

PC VOICE: PC Voice is sold by ARTS Computer Products. The software sells

for about \$500 although you will probably want to purchase the speech card that works with the program. The card sells for around \$200.

PC Voice is designed to work particularly well with a speech card from Artic Technologies called the SP200. However, you should be aware that the voice needs a lot of improvement, and the speech rate is still slower than other more well-known synthesizers such as Echo or Votrax.

PC Voice has a Review Mode which is entered by pressing the F1 function key. (Depressing the F1 function key twice in succession bypasses Review Mode and passes the keystroke to your application.) In Review Mode, you can specify that certain lines on the screen remain silent—that is, that lines not be spoken when data is written to them or when in Review Mode. No facility is provided to help you move the system cursor to the position of the reviewing cursor. In Review Mode, a "find" function is available to help you locate character strings on the screen.

PC Voice handles the speaking of punctuation by normally speaking all special characters. If you want this to be turned off, you have to enter Review Mode and enter a list of characters that PC Voice is not to speak. For external synthesizers such as the Echo or Votrax, PC Voice sends the actual punctuation character instead of converting the character to a word consisting of alphabetic characters. This means that if the synthesizer does not support a punctuation mode per se (which is the case with the Votrax PSS), you will not be able to hear special characters.

Upper case characters are indicated by the word "cap," and it is possible to

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detect upper case characters even when full words are being pronounced instead of spelled.

PC Voice uses a technique called "cursor tracking" to automatically speak data sent to the screen. Data can be spoken in character, word, or line mode. For example, if you are in line mode, nothing will be spoken until the cursor is moved to another line. In word mode, nothing will be spoken until the cursor crosses a word boundary (i.e., a space). This technique works for programs that use the cursor to write data to the screen. However, you should be aware that some programs send data to the screen without moving the cursor, in which case, nothing would be spoken. In fact, some programs remove the cursor from the screen altogether.

PC Voice is said to work on a number of PC Compatibles. ARTS Computer Products should be contacted for additional information.

No information has been provided regarding the ability of PC Voice to use terminal emulation systems.

You should be aware that PC Voice really does not function well with external speech synthesizers. In addition to the problem with punctuation characters (discussed earlier), the program has no facility to stop the external synthesizer from speaking. Most of the other packages have some method for doing this, but PC Voice does not. This is even more critical for PC Voice in light of the fact that it uses "cursor tracking," which means that more data is likely to be sent to the synthesizer than is sent by other speech packages.

**SCREEN-TALK:** Marketed by Computer Aids, this package is definitely the

most economical. Dollar for dollar, you will get the most for your money if you purchase Screen-Talk. The program currently sells for \$395.

Screen-Talk works particularly well with the Echo PC, the Votrax PSS, and DECTALK. Each of these synthesizers is equipped with an "instant stop" feature and the ability to vary pitch—both of which are used by Screen-Talk as a part of its normal operation.

Screen-Talk provides a Review Mode which is entered by pressing the Alternate key. In Review Mode, you can set up a maximum of three windows on the screen, and pressing a single function key permits you to switch quickly between windows. You can mark a specific location on the screen and jump to it with a single keystroke. You can read a specific line, and you can have individual characters pronounced directly or by use of the phonetic alphabet. At this time, Screen-Talk has no cursor joining capability. However, you can turn on a "talking cursor" that will enable you to hear characters that your system cursor lands on as you move it around the screen outside of Review Mode.

Four levels of punctuation are built into Screen-Talk: none, some, most, and all. The All Punctuation level permits you to hear characters not normally visible on the screen (e.g., graphics characters).

Screen-Talk uses a higher pitch to indicate the presence of upper case letters. Therefore, it is helpful for your synthesizer to support command sequences that can raise and lower the pitch of the speech.

Screen-Talk intercepts normal DOS function calls so that data sent to the

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use to learn about the area in which they are walking. By holding the cane in front and moving it from left to right, the blind person can become aware of obstacles in his or her path.

Using a cane (like learning to spell or roller skate) is a skill that must be practiced.

Blind people today travel independently. White Cane Safety Day emphasizes the modern travel techniques blind people use.

White Cane Safety Day is a day to celebrate the accomplishments of blind people.

## ON THE BARRICADES AT THE BUMPER CARS

by Mike George

(The following article appeared in the September, 1985, Gem State Milestones, the official publication of the National Federation of the Blind of Idaho. Mike George is not only a Federationist but also one who takes his Federationism seriously: wherever he may be—at work or at play, in chapter meetings or at the carnival. So does his wife Janet, and so do Federationists Pat and Trudy Barrett. This is what the Federation is all about; and, incidentally, it is why there is no possibility that our march to freedom will be blocked. Too many blind people understand and believe and act.)

The battle of discrimination against blind people still rages, and now it has reached the bumper cars at the Western Idaho Fair. On the night of August 31, 1985, my wife, Janet, and I, along with Pat and Trudy Barrett, met at the fair-grounds and ended up at the bumper cars.

We joined the line like any other person.

The Barretts got past the gate man, but as my wife and I approached, he noticed our canes and stopped us. He said that according to OSHA rules, blind persons were not allowed to ride the bumper cars. We protested, saying that the couple ahead of us were also blind. That didn't work. He went after them, and they unwillingly left their seats. We left the bumper cars undecided what to do. We went on the ferris wheel and then decided to return to the bumper cars and find out just why we weren't allowed to go on. Again, we took our places at the end of the line. Two of our party would act as spokesmen if we were again intercepted, and the other two would act as support. The ticket man was even more upset.

He demanded that we leave the ramp, but we stood fast. We asked why we were not allowed to ride. After all, we had

been to other carnivals and had ridden. He again spoke of the OSHA rules. We asked for a copy, which he couldn't show us. We would not leave the ramp until we were shown a copy of the rules or saw the man in charge of the carnival. The ticket man tried to put us off, saying he would bring the manager in fifteen minutes. We stood still, blocking the line. The manager listened to our story. He, too, tried to explain the OSHA rules to us. He also could not present us with a written copy of the rules he alleged to be quoting. He did finally decide we could ride, although he blustered that there were insurance problems. It was clear that this man thought blind people had no business on any rides, but he did not want a legal fight.

So what does it all mean? It means that far too often we are still looked

upon as second-class citizens and not permitted to take our rightful places in society because of hang-ups about blindness and lack of knowledge as to what a blind person is capable of. Too often people make up their minds before giving us a chance. To the sighted we say: The only difference between us and you is that we carry canes and do not see. We are the National Federation of the Blind, the voice of the blind speaking for ourselves.

September 6th Loren Schmitt, Pat Barrett, and Ramona Walhof went out to speak with Maxine Killian, Chairwoman of the Fair Board. She was warm and friendly and interested in preventing this kind of discrimination in the future. We will work together on this problem. Like us, Mrs. Killian seems to believe it is respectable to be blind.

## PROCLAMATION

**State of Idaho  
Executive Department  
Office of the Governor  
Columbus**

### PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the National Federation of the Blind in Ohio and the nation for many years has been in the vanguard of those fighting for equality for disabled citizens; and

WHEREAS, since the early 1950's

October 15th has been proclaimed across the United States as White Cane Safety Day in recognition of the need to remind all citizens of the rights and capabilities of the blind; and

WHEREAS, the National Federation of the Blind, the oldest and largest organization of blind people in the United States and in Ohio, traditionally conducts its annual Ohio convention during October and this year convenes October 10, 1985, through October 13, 1985, in Springfield, Ohio; and

WHEREAS, the National Federation of the Blind has for forty-five years worked tirelessly to help blind people believe that it is respectable to be blind, to educate the public about the abilities and essential normality of the blind, and to use the legislative and judicial systems to establish the rights and responsibilities of the blind;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Richard F. Celeste, Governor of the State of Ohio, do hereby proclaim October, 1985, as

**National Federation of the Blind  
Month**

throughout the State of Ohio, in recognition of the organization's long

service to Ohioans and of the importance we attach to its work of winning security, equality, and opportunity for the blind.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name and caused the Great Seal of the State of Ohio to be affixed at Columbus this 10th day of September in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Eighty-Five.

Richard F. Celeste  
Governor of the State of Ohio

ATTEST: Sherrod Brown  
Secretary of State

**TALKING CLOCKS—WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

by W. Harold Bleakley

For the last six years or so, the availability of talking clocks has been an on-again, off-again situation. First, Sharp came out with the hand-held Talking Time I—in our judgment, the best hand-held talking clock ever made. Then, Panasonic, Casio, Howard Miller, and even Radio Shack and Seiko got into the portable talking clock business. Spartus introduced its now famous plug-in talking, chiming clock and its little brother, the Electronic Talking Clock. Radio Shack also offered a plug-in talking clock. For a while it seemed that blind persons would have a lot of

talking clock options. Panasonic even came out with a plug-in talking clock radio.

But then, the whole thing deteriorated rapidly. Sharp discontinued the Talking Time I, introduced the Talking Time II, and then stopped making both. Panasonic, Howard Miller, and Casio stopped making talking clocks. In January of 1985 Spartus discontinued the manufacture of the talking, chiming clock. We called the manufacturers to find out what was going on. This is when we learned the hard truth. None of these companies had manufactured talking

clocks specifically for people who are blind. They made them for the general public, and the general public was not willing to pay the prices being asked for talking clocks. So the clockmakers quit making talking clocks. It seemed that talking clocks were gone, never to return.

However, the talking clock situation is on again. Sharp was persuaded to make a limited quantity of the original Talking Time I. The National Federation of the Blind and some other organizations have it for sale (or, at least, should have by the time this article reaches you). The hand-held TTQ Slimline talking clock came on the market in the summer of 1985. The NFB and Aids Unlimited have the TTQ. It is probably also available from other sources. Last fall another hand-held talking clock came on the market—the Omni Talking Time Quartz. It is the smallest hand-

held talking clock ever made. It uses the Sharp Talking Time I chip—the same voice, alarm melody, etc. The NFB and Aids Unlimited also carry the Omni. The Spartus Electronic Talking Clock and the Panasonic talking clock radio have not been discontinued, at least not yet.

In view of the on-again, off-again history of the talking clocks, it is impossible to predict how long any of the talking clocks now available will remain on the market. They're here today, but they may be gone tomorrow. The underlying cause for the on-again, off-again nature of the product has not changed. Manufacturers still make talking clocks for the general public—not for people who are blind. For further information, contact W. Harold Bleakley, President, Aids Unlimited, 1101 North Calvert Street, #1901, Baltimore, Maryland 21202; (301) 659-0232.

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## RECIPES

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### CONGO BARS

by Barbara Cheadle

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As Federationists know, Barbara Cheadle is the Editor of Future Reflections, the national magazine for

parents of blind children. She says of the following recipe:

"John Earl and Chaz collected this

recipe from one of their teachers. They love it. They even liked it when I tried to make it a little 'healthier' for them and used whole wheat flour (1 cup and one cup white) and wheat germ (1/4 cup). I also cut down on the sugar. Instead of packing it to measure it (the normal procedure for brown sugar) I measured it loosely, as you do with white sugar.

2 1/4 cups flour—sifted  
2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

2/3 cup shortening  
2 1/4 cup brown sugar  
3 eggs  
1 1/2 cups nuts (optional)  
1 cup chocolate chips

Mix flour, baking powder, and set aside. Melt shortening, and add brown sugar. Add eggs, one at a time, to sugar mixture. Beat well. Add flour. Add chocolate chips. Mix well. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 - 30 minutes.

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### LOW SALT MEATBALLS

by Emma Stougl

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(Note: Emma Stougl is the Secretary-Treasurer of the Mobridge Chapter, National Federation of the Blind of South Dakota.)

One pound lean ground beef. Boil 1/2 cup of water. Steep one bay leaf for a few minutes and throw away the bay leaf. To the liquid add 1 teaspoon Gourmet Sauce or Kitchen Bouquet, 1/4 teaspoon each of thyme, garlic powder, all-purpose seasoning, 1 tablespoon soy bean meal, and 6 soda crackers (crushed).

Combine all ingredients. Shape meat-

balls with ice cream scoop. Place on greased biscuit pan. Bake at 375 - 400 degrees until lightly browned.

Prepare and partially cook chunked up vegetables—potatoes, carrots, onions. You may add other vegetables of your choice. Omit the celery. Celery is very high in sodium. Make broth from the meat drippings. Add to the vegetables with the meat. Cook the vegetables in small amount of water so no juices are wasted, as we need those for flavor and nutrition as well. Finish cooking in 350 degree oven for 30 minutes. Will serve 6.

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**MONITOR MINIATURES \* \* \* \* \*****\*\*Braille Produced to Order:**

We have been asked to carry the following announcement:

"Multiple Services Media Technology, Inc. (MSMT) was organized to serve the blind and visually impaired population nationwide. Braille, large print, and low vision aids (magnification) are all available at the MSMT office at nominal cost. Typed documents can be processed in Braille or large print (up to 2 1/2 inches) and returned to the customer within 72 hours. For further information, please call MSMT at (415) 454-6768, or send inquiries to: MSMT, Inc., 1000 - 4th Street, Suite 390, San Rafael, California 94901."

**\*\*Senatorial Taping:**

The October 6, 1985, Duluth (Minnesota) Budgeteer carried the following article:

**Tape Recorded Responses  
For Blind**

Senator Rudy Boschwitz has announced that blind Minnesotans now will be able to receive tape recorded responses to their letters to him.

"For a number of years, I've answered letters to the hearing impaired on a special teletype (TTY) machine which involves using a typewriter and a telephone," Boschwitz said. "Now I'd like to start a similar service for those with sight impairments.

"I'm asking any of my Minnesota constituents who are blind and wish to communicate with me to send a recorded letter on a cassette, and in return I

will send the response back on a cassette."

Boschwitz's idea has the support of the Minnesota Federation of the Blind.

Boschwitz added: "I welcome letters from all Minnesotans."

**\*\*To Sell:**

We have been asked to carry the following announcement:

For Sale: Maryland Computer Systems "Total Talk II." Modified Hewlett Packard 2621A computer terminal with votrax speech output. Manual and accompanying literature intact. Like new condition. Price negotiable. Call (406) 543-4950 (evenings).

**\*\*TSI Announces:**

Telesensory Systems, Inc., is now marketing PC VERT and SOFT VERT. PC VERT, which sells for \$3,650, includes a personal computer with talking and word processing software. SOFT VERT, which sells for \$750 without a voice synthesizer, is designed to work with IBM PC and PC-Zenith. It is also available with synthesizers. Prices vary according to the type of synthesizer chosen. For further information, contact Telesensory Systems, Inc., 455 North Bernardo Avenue, Mountain View, California 94043.

**\*\*Surgery:**

Joyce Scanlan went to Mt. Sinai Hospital in Minneapolis September 9, 1985, for the enucleation of an eye. She had been having severe glaucoma pains, so the surgery was necessary to relieve the pressure. This was her second enucleation. The operation was successful, and Joyce hardly slowed the busy pace of her work schedule.

**\*\*Kennelly Amendment Comment:**

When the National Federation of the Blind and Congresswoman Barbara Kennelly worked together a few years ago to pass legislation to give the blind the right to operate vending machines at federal highway rest stops, there were some (especially, those who had not thought of the legislation themselves) who expressed doubts concerning its efficacy. Without fanfare the program has continued to expand throughout the country. As an example, it reached Minnesota in 1985. The first vending machines in the state were installed in the spring at the Thompson Hill Travel Information Center in Duluth. F.C. Marshall, Minnesota/DOT assistant commissioner, Technical Services, said the Duluth installation generates an average of more than \$2,000 in monthly income. Later in 1985 the program was initiated in the twin cities area. Any state which is not taking advantage of this program is not only missing an excellent opportunity for increased income for the blind but is also being wasteful of its potential resources.

**\*\*Missouri Move-A-Thon:**

Rita Lynch writes:

"The first annual move-a-thon for the National Federation of the Blind of Missouri was held on Saturday, September 28, 1985, in Jefferson City. The weather was beautiful as the 23 participants moved over the 10-mile course. Over \$1,200 in pledges was turned in."

**\*\*Speech At Your Fingertips:**

George Grant of Tennessee sends us the following from Science 85:

Stanford, California—While it may lack the human touch, a mechanical hand

designed and built by Stanford University engineering students can easily form the manual alphabet. The hand is meant to free those who are both deaf and blind from constant dependence on a human interpreter. A user "reads" the device through touch—each configuration of the four jointed fingers and opposable thumb represents a different letter. The prototype hand, directed by an IBM personal computer, can make two letters each second. The students say it will eventually be able to interpret electronic signals from a telephone as well as from a computer keyboard.

**\*\*Research:**

We have been asked to carry the following announcement:

I am a visually impaired Ph.D. student at New York University engaged in doctoral research on blindness. I am in need of blind and legally blind individuals between the ages of sixteen and sixty-five who would be interested in participating in this research. It has been most difficult to acquire the large number of subjects necessary for this research.

The research consists of a simply stated multiple choice attitude toward blindness scale which, if you wish to participate, would be mailed to you. The scale would be in your choice of either large print or Braille and would take less than an hour of your time to fill out. All postage costs would be paid by the researcher. It is hoped that the research will aid in the understanding and welfare of blind individuals. All answers to the scale will be completely anonymous. No one's name will ever be mentioned in any research report.

If you are willing to participate in the study, will you please contact us at the following address, indicating your preference for large print or Braille: Ms. Joan Kinzer, 3 Washington Square Village, Apt. 8-K, New York, New York 10012.

**\*\*New Chapter:**

Matt Millspaugh writes:

"On Thursday, October 24, the Oregon Trail Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Oregon was organized in Pendleton. Officers include Roy Timm, President; Dale Faro, Vice President; Robin Cox, Secretary; and Trish Glass, Treasurer. Since this is our first chapter organized east of the Cascade Mountains, we are particularly excited to bring Federationism back to the Other Oregon."

**\*\*New York Convention:**

Lorraine Webb writes:

"The 29th annual convention of the National Federation of the Blind of New York State was held October 25 - 27, 1985, in Plainview. Among the topics discussed throughout the weekend were education of blind children, insurance discrimination, and employment of the blind. Resolutions concerning revenue foregone, the acceptance of national insurance standards in New York State, and the Playboy issue were unanimously adopted by the convention. Pledges totaling \$3,200, half of which will be forwarded to the national treasury, were made at the close of the banquet on Saturday evening. Newly elected officers of the New York State affiliate were: David Arocho, President; Ellen Robertson, First Vice President; Lucy Carpenter, Second Vice President;

Charlie Hamberger, Treasurer; and Lorraine Webb, Secretary."

**\*\*Burda Baby:**

The following comes to us from Chicago:

NFBI Chicago members Tony and Mari Burda have been blessed with the joyous arrival of their second baby girl. Valerie Lynn was born on Sunday, October 20th, at 6:45 a.m., weighing 8 pounds, 4 ounces, and 20 1/2 inches long. Mother, father, Valerie, and 2 1/2 year-old Natalie are doing well.

**\*\*Harps:**

We recently received the following letter:

Dear Sir:

I thought you might be interested to know that our harp books have been published in Braille and, thus, blind students can become harpists. If you have a newsletter that goes to a mailing list, perhaps this could be mentioned. More information available. Just call or write: Carol L. Carlson, Teacher Harps, 282 Stepstone Hill, Guilford, Connecticut 06437; 203-453-1973.

**\*\*Dies:**

Ruby Brown, President of the Toledo Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Ohio, died in October from complications of a stroke. Ruby was a long-time Federationist, one who was loved and respected.

**\*\*Honored:**

As Federationists know, Fred Schroeder is President of the National Federation of the Blind of New Mexico, President of the National Association of Blind Edu-

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cators, and a member of the Board of Directors of the National Federation of the Blind. We recently received a copy of the following certificate:

**Outstanding Young Men of America**

This is to certify that Fredric Kauffmann Schroeder has been selected as an Outstanding Young Man of America for 1985 in recognition of outstanding professional achievement, superior leadership ability, and exceptional service to the community.

Doug Blankenship, Chairman  
Board of Advisors

**\*\*Proofreaders:**

We have been asked to carry the following announcement:

"Triformation Braille Service, Inc., is seeking certified proofreaders who would be willing to relocate to Florida. Come join a progressive corporation, up

and coming in Braille production. Live and work in a warm, relaxed atmosphere year 'round; we'll help. Call us at 305-286-8366 or write to TBS, Inc., 3142 S.E. Jay Street, Stuart, Florida 33497."

**\*\*Correction:**

When we carried the article concerning Scholarships in the November, 1985, issue of the Monitor, we inadvertently omitted the name of Ron Connelly of Connecticut from the list of those appointed to membership on the Committee. Also, Gary Mackenstadt of Washington State was incorrectly listed as a member of the Committee. We apologize for the mistake.

**\*\*Sharp Talking Clocks:**

We now have the original Sharp talking clocks for sale. The price is \$65. Send orders to: National Federation of the Blind, 1800 Johnson Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21230. Clocks can be shipped immediately.

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